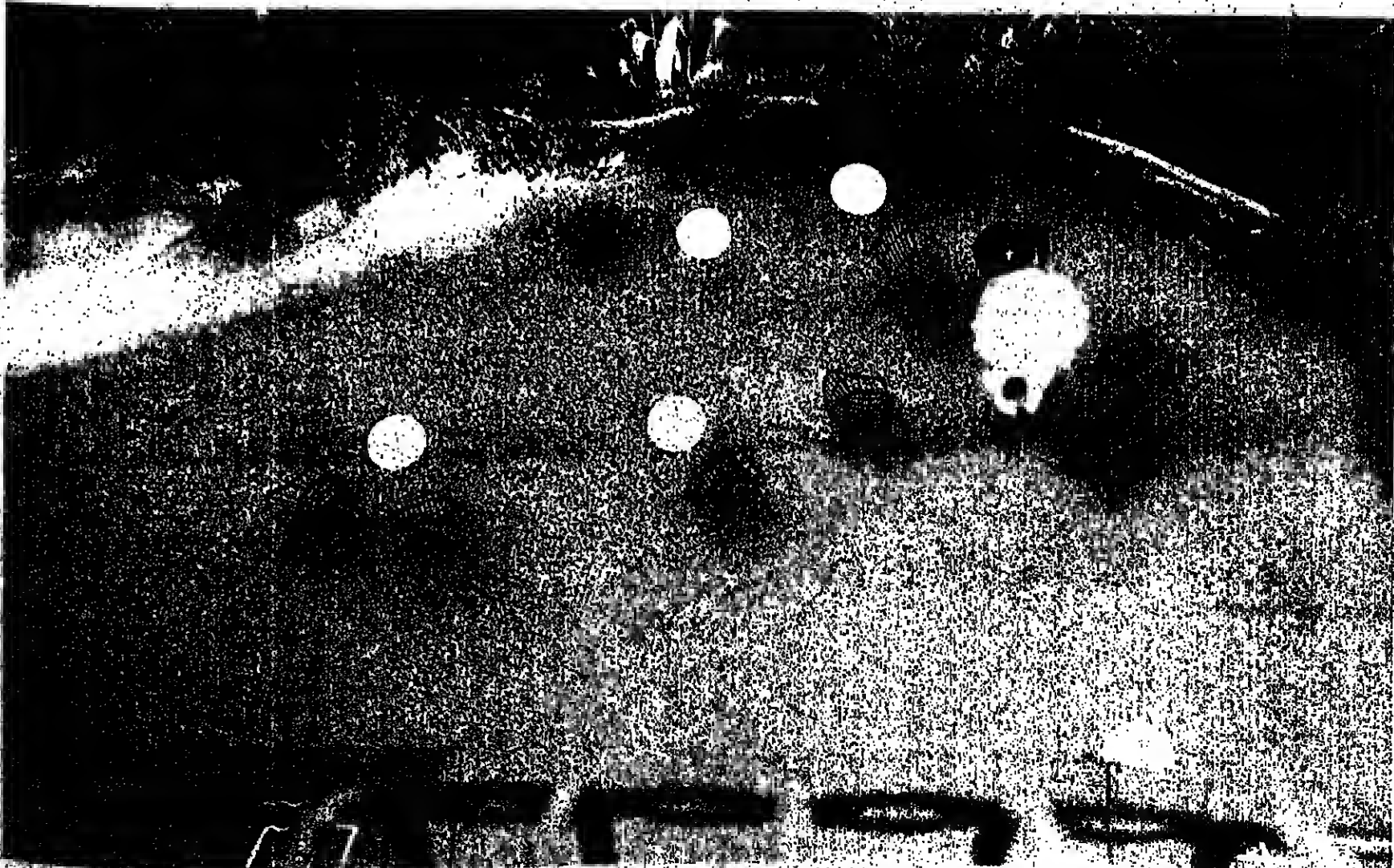


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Cover picture: "Garden Restaurant" by Herbert Bayer, on show until January 14 at the Photographers' Gallery, 5 and 8 Great Newport Street, W1P 3NP.

## The philologist as rock-blaster

Robert Bernard Martin

WILLIAM BENZIE  
Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian scholar adventurer  
302pp. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books.  
0937664 57 X

In A. N. Wilson's recent novel *Wise Virgin*, one of the main characters is a middle-aged scholar, Giles Fox, who has forfeited his eyesight and the best part of an unenviable existence to editing an obscure medieval tract on chastity. He is not far from typical of the modern idea of what scholars are like, and the nineteenth century's image of the breed was not so different from ours, if we can judge by Browning's Grammarian. It is pity that F. J. Furnivall, a scholar of a totally different stripe, left behind him what he thought of the character created by his favourite poet, since we can guess that as a philologist he would have had a quick answer to the lingering linguistic problems posed for the Grammarian by "the doctrine of ecclitc De", and he would have "settled Holt's business" before lunch. Surely he would have made even shorter work of editing Fox's tract on a subject as alien to him as chastity.

Furnivall was one of those energetic Victorians who at this distance seem more like primal forces than mortals: certainly not our stereotype of editor, philologist or scholar. His brand of buccaneering ruthlessness would have entitled him to a place among Carlyle's Captains of Industry, where only his occupation might have made him odd man out. "One of those great rock-blasting entrepreneurs of Victorian scholarship", John Gross called him, "the kind of man who if his energies had taken another turn might have covered a continent with railways."

For the Early English Text Society alone, Furnivall edited thirty-nine volumes, and they were undertaken in his spare time when he was not practising at the bar, teaching at the Working Men's College, serving as secretary to the Philological Society, acting as editor and coordinator of *The New English Dictionary* (to which he contributed some 30,000 exemplary quotations culled from his reading), founding and directing seven literary societies, walking, boxing, cycling, dancing, still sculling fourteen miles on Sundays after he was eighty and much more frequently when he was younger, working for women's suffrage, speaking without notes at endless meetings, holding forth at daily literary levees in the ABC tea-room nearest the British Museum, or employing the vigour of ten in his favourite of all recreations: wrangling with other scholars. Half-a-dozen different friends have left their memories of his delight, when sculling, in arriving at a lock where there was already a queue of boats waiting their turn. Pushing them out of the way with a murderously waving boat-hook, he would triumphantly force his way through, so that he could be first out the other side. It is a precise emblem of his way with other scholars. Obviously a personality very tempting for a biographer, in spite of the difficulties of dealing with such diverse activities.

Like so many of the nineteenth-century human dynamos, Furnivall was born into a strongly Evangelical family and all his life maintained the fervour of his childhood, long after discarding the beliefs that had originally inspired it. His father was a pious and successful doctor who, besides his usual practice, ran a private lunatic asylum that is said to have been worth £200,000 by the time he died, which made it easier for his son to follow the life he had chosen. Young Furnivall's theological beliefs in perfectibility was easily changed to creeds in the future: of a revitalized England growing from the roots of the past (once he had made those roots better understood); his doctrine of work survived almost unchanged; even his Sunday observance remained such a dominant belief in his life that he was tireless in urging on young people their moral duty to mark the Sabbath by going into the open air and enjoying themselves, and he once jawed an audience of persons on the "waste of life" it was "to sit in church listening to outworn dogma."

When he was a young barrister, he taught English literature at the Working Men's College as part of the grand scheme to promote cooperation between the social classes by mixing gentlemen and "snobs" with no more regard to rank than was absolutely necessary. Like some of the other Christian Socialists, he was more egalitarian in theory than in practice, since he had an autocratic streak that prevented him from being happy when anyone else was in the chairman's seat. For him education normally meant bringing the working men nearer his own level rather than any learning from each other. But none of that kept him from being genuinely concerned to use the study of English as the most easily available means of raising the intellectual consciousness of the uneducated masses.



If Furnivall felt little zeal for exactness in philology or editing, it was because he never regarded either discipline as an end in itself. He thought of the *New English Dictionary* as chiefly a record of English civilization told in terms of its language, and he regarded the Early English Text Society as a way of providing literary artifacts to connect Victorians with the daily life and heroic aspirations of their ancestors. "I never cared a bit for philology", he once confessed; "my chief aim has been throughout to illustrate the social condition of the English people in the past."

During Furnivall's lifetime there was a faint stirring of guilt in the universities that they were ignoring English literature, although their more conservative members still pointed out that any decently educated man with a training in the classics needed no instruction in the literature of his own country. Greek or Latin, yes, but English never. As Stephen Porter observed in *The Muse in Chains*, "The one way to which a text-trained Oxford might be got to think seriously about acceptance of English literature was the way of Philology, of old English; it would obviously ease matters if English could be made to look like a dead language." Dead languages need texts to explicate and analyse; men like Furnivall interested in understanding the national heritage wanted records made available of the glorious past. It was a happy convergence of totally different premises leading to the same conclusion, and the result was the wonderful efflorescence of textual and linguistic studies in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In 1858, as a result of the report of its "Unregistered Words Committee", of which Furnivall was a leading member, the Philological Society resolved to jettison the initial proposal of a supplement to existing dictionaries, and to create instead the whole new work that became

the *New English Dictionary*. The story of the *Dictionary* has been told before, but it is good to be reminded of it, recounted this time from the viewpoint of Furnivall, who for a time served as chief editor. He was amazingly fertile in ideas to keep the immense project from dying of its own size: he devised the system of "volunteer" contributors, coordinated their findings, and first hit upon the idea of the *Concise Dictionary* as an abstract of the greater work. Without his ginger the whole project might have died before birth.

After the foundation of the Early English Text Society, Furnivall's sense of urgency, at least as it is described here, naturally slackened as he successfully founded the Ballad Society, the Chaucer Society, the New Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Shelley Society

I could have wished; but I had not time to fish for more." In another collection he gave due notice of possible deficiencies: "Of the pieces now issued some have been printed elsewhere, and of most, perhaps better texts exist; but the time that it takes to ascertain whether a poem has been printed or not, which is the best MS. of it, in which points the versions differ, etc., etc., is so great, that after some experience I find the shortest way for a man engaged in other work, but wishing to give some time to the Society, is to ... print whatever he either does not know, or cannot get at easily leaving others with more leisure to print the best texts. He wants some text, and that at once." (How eloquent of his methods "etc., etc." is.)

His qualifications for philology were even sketchier than for editing, one otherwise admiring co-worker wrote, since he could not so much as conjugate an Anglo-Saxon verb. His criticism was too often based on inadequate readings. When reviewing an edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* he mistook Johnson's preface for a new one by R. G. Latham and complained bitterly that "Dr. Johnson had altogether disappeared" from it. He was negligent, too, about the preparation of the editors whom he asked to undertake work for the Early English Text Society, reckoning that they could easily repair any deficiencies in their background, precisely as he was accustomed to doing himself. One man he invited to edit a medieval Latin manuscript is said never to have read a page of medieval Latin in his life nor even to have handled a manuscript, but he was so mesmerized by Furnivall that he accepted.

His way with adverse criticism was brusque: "To those critics who have objected to the length of my Introductions ... I have only to say that I believe I understand my own business better than they do." When the *Poll Mall Gazette* printed an unfavourable account of one of his works, he replied with a letter in its columns describing the reviewer as a liar and "base beast" no longer fit for the society of decent men and women. As the chairman of a meeting he seldom allowed discussion to continue if he disagreed with it; when a member of the Sculling Club objected that his remarks were illogical, Furnivall cut off further talk by saying simply, "Oh damn your logic." Professor Benzie takes Furnivall at his word when he describes his intimacy with great Victorian writers, but it is not surprising that his private correspondence often gives him the lie, saying how much they disliked him and his truculence. The truth is that his brashness, his impatience and his obstinacy, grating though they were on others, were the very qualities that allowed him to accomplish as much as he did. Good temper has not always characterized English studies.

His biographer refrains from mentioning it overtly, but Furnivall's titanic energy elsewhere was linked to a strong sexual drive. He had a catholic admiration for young women of all conditions ("Woman is the beauty and glory of the world") but was most enthusiastic about working-class girls, a preference that was connected with his admirable fight for female emancipation and education, and which may have accounted as well for his friendship with A. J. Munby, that extraordinary connoisseur of the charms of women labourers. When he was thirty-seven Furnivall married the daughter of a market gardener, a pretty young woman half his age with whom he had lived openly for some time. When he was nearly sixty he gave new cause for scandal by bringing his current mistress, his twenty-one-year-old secretary, to live in the family house, which she shared with his wife until Mrs Furnivall moved out with her son. In John Munro's memoir, published the year after Furnivall's death in 1910, nearly half of the reminiscences contributed by friends not written by women, many of them clearly not well educated, although they are all admiring, not to say adoring. Even as an old man his manner with young women was flirtatious. He was well over seventy when he founded the Furnivall Sculling Club for Girls (he later admitted young men, to move the boats around); he insisted on acting as cox to eight young women wearing the costumes he had specified for them - sailor hats, light loose blouses and serge skirts. The amusement the Sculling Club aroused in his contemporaries







## For solo singers

M. L. West

ANNE PIPPIN BURNETT  
Three Archaic Poets: Archilochus, Alcaeus, Sappho  
320pp. Duckworth. £24.  
07156 16943

The term "archaic", as applied to that phase of Greek civilization which corresponds roughly to the seventh and sixth centuries AC, is too firmly established now to be dislodged. But it has become increasingly incongruous as more knowledge has been gained of much earlier periods; and it seems especially unsuitable for the highly mature and flexible poetry of that time, which can stand comparison with that of any later epoch. It has survived for the most part only in fragments, something over 2,500 of them. That is enough to give us some impression of a handful of major poets, but the fact that they are only a handful hinders their proper assessment. One pops up in one part of Greece, another in another part a couple of decades later, and though our eyes will tend to join up the blobs with lines (like the *canali* that Schiaparelli saw on Mars), we cannot make out the reality of the landscape, the network of local traditions in which each poet had his being. The exceptional case of Alcaeus and Sappho, two poets from the same time and place, permits some limited generalization about Lesbian song. But with Archilochus the question of how much to ascribe to local convention is acute. Comparisons with other writers of *iambos* expose rather than solve the problem.

As her concentration on three poets indicates, Anne Pippin Burnett is less interested in an overall view of the literary scene than in personalities considered on their own. But she inevitably makes some general assumptions. She has a perhaps rather romantic belief in a stratum of ancient popular work, play, and cult songs underlying "the development of archaic monody." She sees the symposium as the principal setting for solo song, rightly, but she warns against the reconstruction of specific situations from poems, arguing that they would not have been preserved if they had not been intended for repeated performances. Certainly many of them will have been sung and sung, but the argument from preservation is dubious: what about Pindar's victory odes? Can we really detach apparent from actual occasion to the extent of asserting that "Alcaeus could stand at ease among banqueting companions while he sang of a self who skulked in exile", or that he "quite possibly... addressed his friends within a single hour, now as a perfect company of gentlemen, now as a conjuration given over to treachery and internal intrigue?"

Mrs Burnett aims to treat the work of these poets "as poems that happen to come from antiquity, not as antique texts that happen to be poetry". She is, of course, too good a scholar not to appreciate that what they meant to their original hearers is to be distinguished from what they might mean to a modern reader, and is the proper object of inquiry. In other words interpretation must be a scholarly process involving the investigation of word associations, conventional themes, and so on. This is what occupies the bulk of this book. All the major fragments are quoted in Greek and translated, usually in a way that is quite correct. (Two pages of interpretation of a piece of Alcaeus are vitiated by the assumption that the poet's "favor" could mean "favored".) There is much detailed reference to modern scholarly discussion, and much spirited criticism of it. Mrs Burnett's own discussions are refreshingly independent and at the same time sensible. Often, indeed, they are highly sensitive and illuminating. I pick out especially her acute interpretation of the song of Sappho in which Aphrodite is summoned to "be seated" in an idyllic grove. She has a talent for alluding to a whole host of other associations and ideas from a few lines of verse. In her zeal for exploring them, however, she sometimes brings in too much evidence. For example, in discussing the extended simile in which Sappho compares an absent friend to the moon, she cites a "body of ancient" beliefs about the moon, not all of which can be attributed to the age. Even where

none of the suggested associations is anachronistic, it is another question whether they are all simultaneously valid. Surely Sappho may say she is paler than grass without any hint that she will get her colour back in another season. It is particularly with Sappho that Mrs Burnett tends to overplay her hand. Fifteen pages on a song of seven stanzas; two pages on its first word, half a page on the first half of the first word. It is a sparkling performance, but one feels that a briefer exposition might have done equal justice to these not very difficult poems. There is a danger of the reader's senses being dulled by abundance to the most important of the points being made.

What positions did these poets occupy in their societies? The answer is clearest in the case of Alcaeus. He belonged to an old-established but not very popular family, battling for its life in turbulent times with only intermittent success. The battles were sometimes physical; but it is misleading to portray Alcaeus' comrades as a band "whose hereditary profession was war" and who "drank together by night because they fought together by day". Fighting was an occasional excitement, not a nine-to-five, round-the-year job. Archilochus, too, seems to have been a prominent man in his city, even if the evidence hardly justifies calling him "a powerful noble". As for Sappho, she must have been a woman of some standing in Mytilene, though her world did not overlap with Alcaeus'. Mrs Burnett accepts the view that she presided over a kind of boarding-school, where girls were prepared for marriage by instruction in music - "the music that would touch their new lives with elegance and harmony" - and by initiation in the mysteries of love and the beauty revealed by love. This carefree homosexual love, however, "untouched by the notions of shame, corruption, birth and eventual death that mark the sexual actions of women with men", is not seen as a preparation for conjugal relations but as a private ideal for the girls to bang on to in their distant, altered lives. Sappho's verse no doubt gives a somewhat selective picture of the life of her group. But whether it was a finishing-school or something else, they do seem to have had quite a nice set-up, and it loses nothing by Mrs Burnett's voluptuous writing. There is much to enjoy and admire in the book. Future interpreters of these three poets will have to pay it a good deal of attention.

## Difficult neighbours

P. J. Rhodes

SIMON HORNBLOWER  
The Greek World 479-323 BC  
354pp. Methuen. £13.95 (paperback, £5.95).  
0416 749909

Five volumes of Methuen's "History of the Greek and Roman World" were published in the 1930s, and a sixth in the 1940s; the first volume, on Greece before 479 BC, never appeared. Intermediate between the *Cambridge Ancient History* and single-volume histories, the series has been a faithful standby for generations of students. Now a new Methuen series "Classical Civilizations" is to be published under the editorship of Fergus Millar. Simon Hornblower's book inaugurates it. In the previous series Greece from 479 to 323 BC was entrusted to M. L. W. Laistner; he produced 327 pages of straightforward narrative, and 142 pages on topics such as warfare, government, literature and religion, in a horribly formal style with a few footnotes, four pages on the sources, and six of modern bibliography. Hornblower has given us 293 pages a single, integrated account which follows separate regional threads to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and weaves them together thereafter, with one chapter after the Peloponnesian War on topics to which justice could not be done within the narrative framework; the style is a good deal more conversational than that of fifty years ago; the sources are introduced in the first chapter and are cited more generously than by Laistner; there are twenty-nine pages of endnotes and four of critical bibliography. Analysis of one chapter will give an idea of

## In a hard light

P. E. Easterling

ROBERT FAGLES (Translator)  
Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays  
Introduction and Notes by Bernard Knox  
408pp. Allen Lane. £14.95.  
07139 14556

One of the most important achievements of modern American scholarship has been in making genuinely poetic translations of ancient poetry. Robert Fagles has established his reputation with the *Oresteia*; his latest venture, the three Theban plays of Sophocles, is perhaps a still more ambitious undertaking. Bernard Knox has contributed authoritative introductory essays and explanatory notes; the overall impression the book gives is of a careful and sensitive effort to "stand in the hard Sophoclean light" (Pound, quoted as a watchword in the preface). Sophocles is of course extraordinarily difficult to translate. The density and ambiguity of his language and the understated effects of style are all too easily lost as the translator finds himself forced to choose too definitely between different possible renderings. It would be wrong to judge this translation, or any translation, by the criterion of an unattainable ideal; we should rather be asking what are the translator's most important goals and most dangerous pitfalls.

The pitfalls are easier to identify. Translation is one which Fagles very rarely falls into ("the walls for men and women in your halls" is an isolated example). More difficult to avoid is unevenness of tone: translations are often modishly pretentious, or banal, or both. Fagles is not pretentious - one of his major strengths is the dignity and seriousness of his rendering - but sometimes the dialogue falls flat. "Well then, I'll be going", says Tiresias at the end of his violent quarrel with Oedipus, and in an otherwise intense speech of denunciation he foretells "a load of other horrors". In *Oedipus at Colonus* Iamenes' reply to Antigone's agonized question "Where, I ask you, where do we wander now? - / what alien land, what heaving salt seas - / where will we find the bitter bread of life?" comes down with a bump: "I've no idea". But the colloquial manner is more often a strength than a weakness: Fagles can use it to achieve effects of sustained in-

tensity, and despite the examples just quoted his control over tone is usually secure.

Modern translations often break up complex syntax into shorter units and rely heavily on exclamation and parataxis. Fagles is not without his favourite mannerisms ("Never", "No!", "Enough"), but he avoids the monotonous staccato effect of long stretches of very short lines, and in general his rhythmic instinct is very sure. Just occasionally he sacrifices perfect clarity to the demands of rhythm or style, but he is scrupulous with his text, and Knox's notes explain the choice that has been made in the case of disputed readings.

What does this translation positively achieve? It captures something of Sophocles' sophistication and depth and much of his formal variety and rhetorical power. Whole layers of literary allusion are inevitably lost, but the renderings do bear out the important point made by Knox that Sophocles' plays explored contemporary realities with intellectual rigor. Fagles is not afraid of repeating words when Sophocles does ("ruin" in *Antigone*, "noble" in *Oedipus at Colonus* for instance); this can be particularly effective in his versions of the lyrics. The best way to illustrate his quality is to give a sample; here is a stanza from a famous ode in the *Colonus*:

Not to be born is best  
when all is reckoned in, but once a man has seen the light  
the next best thing, by far, is to go back  
back where he came from, quickly as he can.  
For once his youth slips by, light on the wing  
lightheaded - what mortal blows can he escape  
what griefs won't stalk his days?  
Envy and enemies, rage and battles; bloodshed  
and last of all despised old age overtakes him,  
stripped of power, companions, stripped of love -  
the worst this life of pain can offer,  
old age our mate at last.

As one would expect, Knox's contributions are all thoughtful and eloquently written; the piece on *Oedipus the King* includes a discussion of free will and responsibility that ought to be required reading for all students of Sophocles. His analysis of *Antigone* has many good points to make, but leaves one feeling that the issue is treated a shade too categorically; the ambivalent response of the Chorus comes out more strongly in Fagles's translation.

The book is well designed and opulently produced, almost too opulently; the paperback will no doubt be a more comfortable weight.

points we are given not only a statement of what Hornblower believes but an indication of why he believes it. If he had tried to cover his tracks thoroughly the notes would have had to be extended considerably; as things stand, there are places where the expert will recognize that an alternative view is being argued against but the novice will not realize that controversy exists.

References and notes are admirably up to date, and opportunity has been taken in several recently published investigations. Modern archaeological findings, modern archaeological theories, and other archaeological theories are all brought into the account. The end of the book is a strange mixture of "The final assessment of Alexander's death" and "The hellenistic volume of the series", a volume which I fear will be recognized by the many students whose syllabuses end with Alexander's death.

In the effort to achieve prompt publication, a number of minor errors have slipped through the net; the corrected reprint, when it comes, will be an even better book than the original. One mistake is important enough to be corrected here. Page 139 dates the outbreak of Hyperbolus "probably in 418", which is not the case. The outbreak of the Peloponnesian War in the nineteenth century BC, and the all would now agree is too early; and there is on page 124 an inscription recording an alliance between Athens and Argos in 418 BC and attributed to Hyperbolus which in fact belongs to the summer of 416 and contains no mention of its author.

To write a standard history which comes to the essential material and yet is interesting and entertaining, of such a widely held view of the past, and 'have' as practical as possible, submitted the arguments for

## Below street level

B. W. Cunliffe

RALPH MERRIFIELD  
London: City of the Romans  
287pp. Batsford. £14.95.  
07134 27450

The origin and early history of a city cannot fail to be an emotive issue for anyone with the least degree of curiosity. Few can resist the temptation of peering into a contractor's hole and many of those who do are now sufficiently aware of the work of the archaeologist to realize that the layers of dirt and rubble they are seeing in the trench sides are the raw material from which history is written. Every gulp of the bulldozer's jaws consumes another part of the record unread, a record which is finite and fast disappearing, especially in the centres of our major cities like London.

It was not until the 1930s, when Mortimer Wheeler took over the running of the London Museum, that any systematic watch was kept on development sites in the city. After the war, in the wake of massive rebuilding following the Blitz, when vast areas of the ancient core of the city were redeveloped, the problem of how best to organize an archaeological response had rapidly to be faced. In the event an Excavation Council was set up to dig bombed sites before development, while the Guildhall Museum staff recorded what could be rescued during building operations elsewhere. In 1965 Ralph Merrifield, then deputy keeper of the Guildhall Museum, published an up-to-date survey of results under the title *The Roman City of London*. Now, eighteen years later, he returns to his old love in *London: City of the Romans*.

Eighteen years have seen a revolution in our knowledge, largely as the result of the arduous and often spectacular activities of the Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology. Wist Merrifield presents is a thoroughly up-to-date account of the city, incorporating the latest discoveries and the latest thoughts,

## On the wrong track

Stuart Piggott

TOM WILLIAMSON and LIZ BELLAMY  
Lay Lines in Question  
232pp. World's Work, Hatfield Associates, 19  
Christchurch Hill, London NW3. £9.95.  
0437 92359

Lay lines form the core of a belief about prehistoric Britain, held by many people, that does not coincide with the inferences of archaeologists, but is summed up in William Blake's dictum, "The Primeval State of Man was Wisdom, Art and Science". The "lines", in the original presentation of the belief in the 1920s, were Old Straight Tracks laid out by ancient man with mathematical precision, and recoverable by drawing lines with a ruler on the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map through a number of features recorded there; those with the most significance being prehistoric burial mounds and other earthworks such as hill-forts; medieval churches, castle mottes, homesteads, and stone crosses; and small "mark stones", ponds, fords, wells, avenues of trees and isolated Scots pines. If more than a certain number of these features occurred on the pencil line, over a given distance of miles, you had stumbled on a 'lay line' dating from what are usually said to be "neolithic times", and revealing the 'lost skills of the ancient surveyors'. Corroboration was sought in place-names and other evidence of the lost wisdom. Included were geometrical constructions striding the countryside, like the Great Decagon and the Glanbury Vesica, to say nothing of a complex of 'sacred arrays of the Signs of the Zodiac' outlined by roads, woods, streams and rivers. There inevitably followed UFOs, lines of force, dowsing, levitation, the Holy Grail, the Golden Age, "Ducanville" had been said, and the story completed.

Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy rightly believe that this belief, and the many variations on it, is a relic of a bygone age, and that its essential material and yet is interesting and entertaining, of such a widely held view of the past, and 'have' as practical as possible, submitted the arguments for

set against the background of the city's rapid rise and its eventual death. But this is far more than a bold statement of archaeological fact and historical narrative, for the author often digresses, in a most entertaining fashion, to explain the subtleties of particularly difficult or interesting archaeological problems. No one who reads the book can fail by the end to understand something of how the archaeologist goes about this work: it is an honest insight into the more fascinating ways of the profession.

The story of London is by no means complete and many problems necessarily remain unresolved. What happened, for example, in the seven years or so after the Roman invasion of AD 43? The main river crossing there seems to have been well upstream in the vicinity of Westminster, but already on the site occupied by the later city there was some activity - a military-style ditch at Aldgate produced a bone handle-grip of a legionary's sword. It is not much to go on, but the earliest levels are so deeply buried that they are seldom seen. What does emerge, however, is that urban development did not really get under way until about AD 50 from when, in the heart of the city, in the area of Lombard, Fenchurch and Gracechurch Streets, fragments of early timber-framed buildings with gravelled areas between them have been uncovered.

We know from Tacitus that early London was teeming with merchants and traders - a boom town in the new Roman province where a wily entrepreneur could make rich pickings by exploiting the natives; we also know that in AD 60 Britain was in the throes of a revolt led by Queen Boudicca and London, along with Colchester and Verulamium, was burnt to the ground. By plotting the distribution of the fire-discoloured samian pottery, closely dated to the time of the Boudiccan revolt, the extent of the earliest city can be roughly gauged. The centre lay to the east of the River Walbrook but there was an extensive spread to the west as far as King Edward Street - in other words London by AD 60, a decade after its founda-

tion, was already a considerable town. In addition to fragments of burnt buildings there is the tantalizing evidence of large numbers of human skulls found in the mud of the River Walbrook - could they have been the result of decapitations when London fell to the rebels? - so far the dating evidence is too vague to be sure, but the possibility remains.

After the disaster London, like the rest of the province, was slow to recover and it was not until the early 70s that work began on an impressive civic centre - the forum and basilica which lie deep beneath the centre of the modern city just north of the confluence of Lombard, Fenchurch and Gracechurch Streets. The latter part of the decade saw urban development in south-eastern Britain in full swing, spurred on by governors intent on integrating the wayward province with the rest of the Empire. Almost as soon as the first forum had been completed, plans seem to have been laid to replace it with a far more grandiose structure incorporating a huge basilica about the same length as St Paul's. It was largely finished about the turn of the century though certain modifications were being made, possibly in preparation for the visit of the Emperor Hadrian in 122.

London at this time was at its peak. Down at Cannon Street, facing the Thames, stood the governor's palace; on the north-western fringes of the urban zone, in the Cripplegate area, was a twelve-acre fort for the military personnel stationed at London; and elsewhere within the regular grid of streets masonry buildings abounded. Behind all this prosperity lay the rapid commercial development of London's port with its wharfs built of massive baulks of squared timber lining the river front (so dramatically exposed in a recent series of excavations). It was here that cargoes from all over the Roman world were unloaded, bringing to the young province such luxuries as Italian wine, Spanish fish sauce, glass from the East and bronze tableware from southern Italy, to grace the tables of the *nouveau riches*.

The late first and early second centuries

these beliefs to a critical examination, point by point, including the statistics of chance. They have then patiently and dispassionately, courteously but relentlessly, shown that the lines "are not intentional alignments of evolved sites that were first established in the neolithic period, but are coincidental alignments of otherwise unrelated features" and that the theory built around them ranks as "one of the biggest red herrings in the history of popular thought". Sometimes called "alternative archaeology" it is clearly not this, but an alternative to archaeology and history, standing as alchemy does to chemistry or astrology to astronomy. The lay lines do not handle evidence according to the normal criteria of scholarship and their model of the past is an emotional rather than an intellectual construct. They ignore modern developments in archaeology and history, and in particular take their concept of British prehistory from strangely outdated secondary sources; they seem unaware of the modern approach to agrarian history and the evolution of the landscape from which they select their chosen points for alignment.

This excellent book takes the enquiry further by exploring the social context within which such views find acceptance. From their beginning in the 1920s these ideas have involved no more than a view of the rural landscape, the town-dwellers' nostalgic countryside of the Georgian poets in their weekend cottages, where "Out in the country everyone is wise. / We only can be wise on Saturday" as Harold Monro put it. From here to the notion of a prehistoric Golden Age is a short step, and in this background H. J. Massingham, from *Downland Man* (1926) to *Through the Wilderness* (1935) is a significant figure. Today, in a predominantly anti-intellectual and populist climate of thought, such ideas have an added significance as a DIY hobby for anyone. "No one needs to be an expert in any field, no A-levels are needed", writes a lay line, "all that is necessary is a love of the countryside, an ability to observe".

The study of antiquity is reduced to a leisure activity, with no need for hard work to intellectual application. All the time too there lurk the pleasures of projecting one's own presuppositions into the prehistoric past, and the authors aptly compare those astro-archaeologists anxious to people prehistory with ancestral mathematicians, a tendency from which even the great Newton was not immune, while his contemporary, the Reverend William Stukeley, discovered fellow-clergyman among the Druids. Much of the attraction of the neo-archaeological, unhistorical approach to the past is its appeal to faith and belief, and the promise of a sort of certainty very different from working hypotheses scrapped when they are shown not to work; and replaced by better models, offered by archaeology.

Some years ago Sir Peter Medawar confronted this problem of popular pseudo-science in a classic review. "The spread of secondary and tertiary education", he wrote, "has created a large population of people, often with well-developed literary and scholarly tastes, who have been educated far beyond their capacity to undertake analytical thought." To such people, facile and intellectually dishonest approaches to problems such as the pseudo-archaeology of the lay hunters and their associates make an instant appeal: it is all so easy and so cosily comforting, with its hints of the occult and the mysterious. One would like to think that Williamson and Bellamy's *Lay Lines in Question* might undermine this sort of faith, but I am not sanguine. I would give the last word to St. Peter, who concluded "If it were an innocent, passive gullibility it would be excusable, but all too clearly, alas, it is an active willingness to be deceived".

The most recent volume in the British Academy's *Tabula Imperii Romani* series, *Condate Gloum-Londinium-Lutetia*, covers Southern England and Northern France (109pp., with maps. Oxford University Press. £18.00 D 19726020 9). The volume includes maps of Paris and London.


marked the peak of London's prosperity; thereafter there are signs of decline, reflecting the successive economic crises which gripped the empire at large. This is not to say London was destitute - far from it. The economy was sufficiently strong to fund a resh of monumental buildings, including a temple complex, put up at about the time of the visit of the Emperor Severus in the early third century. In the same period the entire built-up area was enclosed by a handsome city wall, but even so there were large open areas where previously buildings had stood and the dereliction seems to have grown, until by the middle of the fifth century, after Roman rule had broken down, London had become a ghost town.

The story of London's growth and decline so lovingly presented by Merrifield, is based entirely upon archaeological evidence and more particularly upon the results of excavations carried out under the most difficult of conditions amid the redevelopments of the last forty years. By the end of this century it is unlikely that there will be much of the unique archaeological record of the city left undisturbed. Ralph Merrifield's book is timely. It is a taking stock of what we know. In presenting us with an elegant and highly readable survey he has brought into sharp focus the problems to which archaeologists must now address themselves before it is too late.

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## The fleet embattled

### Robert Conquest

ISRAEL GETZLER  
Kronstadt 1917-1921: The fate of a Soviet democracy  
296pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0 521 24479 X

The familiar saying that for every honest sympathizer with communism there sooner or later comes a Kronstadt can be supported by the reaction to all sorts of villainies – the Moscow Trials, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and so on. But why did the original Kronstadt not do the trick once and for all? Because, like the others in their turn, it was forgotten? Some years ago, when the centenary of the Paris Commune and the fiftieth anniversary of Kronstadt fell on the same week, the colour supplements were full of the former: nothing about the latter, though the Commune was no more than the last hiccup of Jacobinism (with Fabre d'Eglantine's calendar and all), while Kronstadt was the forerunner of many revolts against Leninism. Or so I would have said until recently: but Israel Getzler's illuminating new book reminds one that, at least in its public phraseology, Kronstadt too had much in common with the romantic revolutionism of pre-Leninist days.

Professor Getzler gives two-thirds of his space to Kronstadt between 1905 and 1920, and in particular the period between March 1917 and July 1918 which he sees as the "golden age of Soviet democracy" at the naval base. He plainly sympathizes with the Kronstadt experiment. But he is also clear about its defects: "the obsessive desire" to subject all decisions to "the active body politic"; "indeed, it was precisely the flourishing grass-roots democracy that sometimes enabled popular, skillful, and unscrupulous agitators to subvert the institutionalized 'general will'". A Bolshevik comment puts it in even more hostile fashion: "degraded and disintegrated by a katanga-like existence under Tsardom, this crowd lacked proletarian class-consciousness. It had the

psychology of a Lumpenproletariat... Such acerbity is due to the unfortunate fact that, as Getzler points out, this bastion of the revolution had as its staunchest supporters "the neo-Populist, non-Marxist, radical left, the Left SRs, SR-Maximalists and Anarcho-syndicalists". Lenin was furious with the sailors from soon after the February Revolution, and they were later continuously critical of the Soviet regime. But the "unscrupulous agitators" whom Getzler mentions as successfully distorting their intent were Bolsheviks; and however persistently unsatisfactory to Lenin the Kronstadters may have remained in their internal arrangements, they always provided the Bolsheviks with armed support at critical moments.

It can be argued that, in one sense, Kronstadt was an anomaly. It is certainly true that it was a very particular case. The island naval base, serving a Tsarist fleet run with clumsy brutality, had already seen a mass mutiny of a primitive, unthinking kind in 1905, followed by a largely Social-Revolutionary rising in 1906. By 1917, it probably held more rank-and-file revolutionaries, since it was inevitably staffed with fairly skilled personnel, than any other armed garrison or even civilian locality. The February Revolution in Petrograd resulted in an immediate takeover by a "Committee of the Movement" headed by an SR student, and eventually by a Kronstadt Soviet. For the next nine months this body alternated between non-recognition and highly conditional and often repudiated recognition of the Provisional Government, in spite of intercession by the Petrograd Soviet and even, at times, by the Bolshevik Party. After the October Revolution (in which Kronstadt's support was crucial) it remained under the control of non-Bolsheviks, and continued its multi-party, or non-party, democratic debate over every issue, conducted both in the very public Soviet and in mass meetings in Anchor Square. Later it came out against Brest-Litovsk, and finally in mid-June 1918 a Cheka operation, ostensibly to root out White Guard plotters (and soon linked to the abortive Left SR revolt in Moscow in early July),

led to a complete seizure of the Kronstadt Soviet by the Bolsheviks.

The Bolshevik plenipotentiary, Raskolnikov, though unpopular for his ostentatious self-indulgence, kept a tight organization. But when Zinoviev contrived to get the Kronstadt party under the control of his Petrograd apparatus, and Raskolnikov was removed in February 1921, control slithered (Raskolnikov, of course, was one of those disgraced in the 1930s, having the rare afterlife of a posthumous rehabilitation and restoration to party membership under Khrushchev, and a still more posthumous de-rehabilitation later on).

The 1921 strike wave in Petrograd was a true large-scale workers' movement which severely shook the regime, though rather overshadowed in history by the greater drama at Kronstadt. It had effectively been put down by the beginning of March. A week earlier, joint worker-sailor action might perhaps have prevailed. As it was, it was an insistence on hearing the workers' grievances which began the sailors' revolt. What was astonishing was the way in which the tumultuous democracy, expressed nearly two years earlier, instantly came back to life. Also interesting, and the harbinger of similar events in later crises in the Communist world, was the concurrent breakdown of the Communist Party itself in Kronstadt. On March 3, 1921, a "Provisional Bureau of the Kronstadt Organisation of the Russian Communist Party" was set up, headed by local veterans, with the purpose of supporting the rebel regime. But within a few days even this group crumbled, with the resignations of some 500 party members.

Though Lenin privately remarked that the rebels "do not want the White Guards and they do not want our state power either", the Communist line was that they were simply counter-revolutionaries, under the thumb of their ex-officer Chief of Staff Kozlovsky, who had in fact been one of the Bolsheviks' most loyal "military specialists". The Communists also attempted to improve appearances by alleging that the original Kronstadt sailors had now moved off, leaving a new and inexperienced lot. Trotsky was the original purveyor of the line, claiming that "vast numbers of revolutionary sailors" had been replaced by "accidental elements". Getzler shows that this last-ditch Marxist respectability is quite false: "at least three quarters of the 10,000 to 12,000 sailors – the mainstay of the uprising – were old hands who had served in the navy through war and revolution". This was particularly true of the 1,900 veteran sailors of the *Petrovsk* and *Svobodny* who spearheaded it, and of the majority of the Revolutionary Committee.

When we ask what their motivations were in the final rebellion, we may think that the precise formulation, at least of positive aims, was to some extent a matter of "false consciousness". The negative aims were clear: to get rid of a regime of terror, of oppression of the peasants, and of perks for the commissars. Politically their outlook was almost inevitably presented in revolutionary terms, because the old intense hatred of Tsarism had destroyed any alternative. But after four years, loathing of the Bolsheviks seems to have been the real factor. In June 1918 a mutiny at the Torpedo Division on the mainland was in protest against bad conditions, without political content. A sailors' mutiny on October 14, 1918, had taken place under "reactionary" slogans. More striking yet, when in June 1919 Yudenich was advancing on Petrograd, the garrisons of Kronstadt's own mainland fort of Krasnaya Gorka, including many Communists and Left SRs, had gone over to the Whites.

Another of Lenin's estimates, however, may seem to go to the heart of the matter: whether "the new power" stood "to the left of the Bolsheviks or slightly to the right" it was bound to serve as a "stepladder" to "bourgeois counter-revolution". If one feels that the Kronstadt type of worker-sailor democracy was a bathhouse flower which could only have survived as long as it did, or been revived as it temporarily was, in those very exceptional and isolated circumstances, and even then without much sign of permanence, then Lenin's general point, if not his terminology, may seem valid.

Kronstadt's immediate accomplishment was the conversion of Lenin to NEP. He saw the revolt as the true crisis of the Bolsheviks' current policies. Professor Getzler quotes letters received by the sailors from peasant relatives, and passed around the ships, which show that the connection with the regime's insane agricultural policy was a direct one; and though the rebels disclaimed restoration of the free market, one of their demands was for the workers' right to "direct exchange of products with the peasants" which amounts to much the same thing.

The regular Red Army assault on Kronstadt was a failure, and only by mobilizing special units of Communists was a human wave attack finally successful. As the author points out, the even the allegedly democratic factions in the Communist Party, like the Workers' Opposition, boasted about their loyal response to party discipline. As so often since, it was precisely this fetishism of party unity which set them off from all other political or moral considerations. It gave them victory; but it had also brought them into a desperate situation in the first place, as it was to do so often later, and no doubt will again.

## The masses divided

### Alec Nove

VICTOR ZASLAVSKY  
The New Stalinist State  
193pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.  
0 7108 0419 9

This is an intelligent extended essay by a thoughtful author. Victor Zaslavsky's political position is by no means unsympathetic to socialist ideas, though of course he stresses their pervasiveness in the Soviet Union. Without going quite so far as Alexander Zinoviev, he insists that there is a sort of "organized consensus", that the regime is able to "organize" stratification and use graded privilege to achieve a considerable degree of acceptance and stability. He explains the revival of the Stalin cult, not just or even mainly at the summit of political power but also among the people. Here the traditional myth of the Good Tsar is reinforced by memories of big industrial advances and social mobility of the first under Stalin the privileged trembled in terror, whereas now they enjoy their privileges unchallenged. The atomization of society is accepted by many if not most, "in exchange for a few real or even illusory privileges".

Zaslavsky notes the role of army service in the processes of socialization, and also of closed (secret) enterprises and "closed cities" – these being parts of a hierarchical structure which divides the masses: those working in

closed high-priority enterprises and/or who have a resident's permit for Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, etc., have a valid sense of group-manship, so to speak. He refers also to a category which is new to me, "limnichiki" (or "limnichik"), persons who have a temporary permit to live in a closed city conditional upon working in a prescribed job, and who could lose this if they are fired. He notes with interest the widespread "working-class chauvinism" reflected in popular reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the conformist attitude of most intellectuals.

His chapter on nationalities and ethnic questions generally is also sensible and balanced, with the Russians as dominant, but with some authentic power exercised in the union republics. "The control of local elites is no simple matter of domination-subordination. It is a matter of the widespread feeling of identification with the Baltic republics, but regarded as an alien view that Islam is a unifying and stabilizing factor in Central Asia."

The "organized consensus" is under strain as a result of economic difficulties and the lack of dynamism which characterized the post-war period. There are many outstanding problems, one of which is the lack of a danger of having recourse to nationalist sentiment. But I cannot adequately summarize Zaslavsky's complex argument. Apparently the effort is great (Sweet Guinea pigs

## Doing without the music

### Russell Davies

NOËL COWARD  
The Lyrics  
418pp. Methuen. £9.95 (paperback, £3.95).  
0 413 54310 2  
ROBERT KIMBALL (Editor)  
The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter  
354pp. Hamish Hamilton. £25.  
0 241 11141 2

Everyone knows that the words of popular songs and show-tunes stand up only very shakily by themselves; and the nearer one gets to the sources of such material, the more frankly this fact is admitted. As Noël Coward remarks in his own introduction:

Unless the reader happens to know the tune to which the lyric has been set, his eye is liable to be bewildered by what appears to be a complete departure from the written rhythm to which his eye has subconsciously become accustomed. In fact, what I am trying to explain to the reader of this formidable volume is that in many instances, the words and rhythms he reads, divorced from the melody line that holds them together, may appear to be suddenly erratic, abrupt or even nonsensical.

Making a similar point from a slightly more showbiz-industrial point of view, Robert Kimball, editor of the new Cole Porter book (which really is a formidable volume), adds: "Of course, it would have been desirable to have compiled the music along with the lyrics, especially since Porter almost always wrote both. But such a compilation would have run to thousands of pages, and its cost would have been prohibitive. The task lies more properly in the domain of the music publisher."

Seeing the complete – or complete – possible – output of a man like Porter is extremely interesting. For one thing, vast portions of his work were rejected or discarded: sometimes by producers; or by common consent of public and production staff during try-outs; or by the public's second thoughts after a show's opening; or even by prestigious cast members (Bert Lahr, we are quite believably told, refused to perform one highly-wrought song called "Dainty Quainty Me" simply because the rhyme-scheme, in *extremis*, had stooped to match "cinema" with "cinema"). And this is to say nothing of the stuff Porter himself consigned to the waste-bin before his secretaries could copy, date and file it. So this is a man capable of watching great goods of his effort wiped out not just from the public but from the private record.

Born in 1891, Porter made a meal of the early-century good-fellowship at Yale (where he wrote several of those inexcusably awful satirical songs) and took a long time to grow out of it. The 1920s did not offer him the best of times in which to progress. The real glue of the musical development of the age were rambling in dives and speakeasies, where black jazz instrumentalists were extending the compositional vocabulary of the age. Porter knew about this (in a mid-1920s note he refers to "an entirely new rhythm which only the blacks have used so far") but his visits were only a fashionable slumming. Being rich, well-connected, an experienced European traveller and one of the more notable good-time Charlies on the Fitzgerald-fuelled cocktail circuit, he was rather distantly connected to the developments at home, and had, for the most part, only conventionally insouciant lyrics to add to the age of the flapper.

By 1926 he was becoming a letter records, in fact that he was living in a palazzo in Venice, where "I had given up all hope of ever being successful on Broadway" (he was thirty-two by this time) and had taken up painting. It was Irving Berlin who sent a New York producer out to Italy to haul Porter back to Broadway, and the immediate result was "Let's Do It", one of his most enduring and most successful hits. (Noël Coward himself eventually applied to Porter for permission to extend the lyrics in his own direction, and was refused.) "Chicks do it, Japs do it" was perhaps not the most ingratiating of starts, but "Let's Do It, Bees do it" had been substituted. The song was away. Porter's readings to the producers, Brownie and Swinburne, had been of his suitably bizarre fruit ("Old time, who's doing down from twigs do it" / "The effort is great / Sweet Guinea pigs



every appearance of slavish imitation of its recent forbear ("The fools fall, the wise fall / The wets, the sprinkled and the dries fall..."). But the sound-film was beginning to demonstrate the possibilities of more intimate performance; and in Fred Astaire, Porter found a conversational delivery-man of a truly unusual and perfectly appropriate kind. With the de-bonair whiplash of Astaire and the contrasting foghorn of Ethel Merman, along with the more conventional voices of both sexes, Porter was equipped for the 1930s with a potentially complete range of human vocal production; and he did not let the opportunity slip. Probably his last single burst was the Merman trio of "I Get A Kick Out Of You", "You're The Top", and "Anything Goes", from the show of that name. Even here, controversy pursued Porter into the wings ("Some got a kick from cocaine" was frowned upon, and doesn't look quaint even yet); and his long-lived 1920s persona still lurked ("That would bore me terribly too..."). But the talent had found its way.

It was in 1937 that the riding-accident occurred in which Porter's legs were crushed by a horse (he lay there, he claimed, working on the song "Al Long Last Love" until help arrived, hence perhaps the line "Is it an earthquake or simply a shock?") A series of some thirty operations to save the limbs – unavailing at the last – began its course; and he was in pain ever afterwards. Porter must have found the "kick from champagne" even harder to come by than before. Not that there was any lack of cause for celebration. By now sheer showbiz experience could be relied on to flog out such flag-wavers as "Be A Clown" or "From This Moment On", perhaps the most famous Porter song to be dropped by the production for which it was written (though it's noticeable that the production version features a rather glitzy-looking "Interlude" which may have killed the number's chances). But gradually the feeling comes that zest is being fought for, and a late upbeat masterpiece like "It's All Right With Me" is rare. Porter's songs for *High Society* were fine, but charm of delivery secured the fame of most of them. On the whole it was surprising that he managed them at all: He had suffered a mental breakdown in 1951; his wife had died in 1954; and his last decade was a trial both to him and to those around him. Neither he nor his talent was built to cope with tragedy.

Though the works of Porter and Coward have moments of deft similarity, particularly when the habits of natives of distant Baluchistan of the South Sea Islands are under discus-

sion, the careers have an entirely different shape. Beginning as an *enfant terrible* in the 1920s, Coward gradually discovered a poignant purpose in his British citizenship. *Cavalcade* inaugurated the trend, and it culminated in his war-service as a touring artist and sending a drive from Hanoi to Saigon) and onward to "There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner", the anti-cheer-up anthem which it is interesting to see in its American variation ("In Maine the melancholia / Is deeper than tongue can tell"). By and large, the names are invoked by both men to call up received ideas and to site rather impertinently colonialist fantasies. One couldn't get away with much of it today.

If Porter's work seems, of the two, the more emblematically representative of his own national life, it's probably because it tries less hard to be. His best writing is tied more intimately to the immediate needs of American musicals and the known capabilities of the American stars who presented them (Coward's artists always had to resist imitating Coward). Moreover, the bewilderment of arty-social-consumer references in Cole Porter songs is a very American thing in the first place. When he writes "You're the top! / You're an Arrow collar. / You're the top! / You're a Coolidge dollar. / You're the nimble tread of the feet of Fred Astaire. / You're an O'Neill drama, / You're Whistler's mumma / You're Cnnembert...", he is actually saying something about the "great storehouse of America" where all these things are, in their different ways, available. (Likewise the jolly racial mix implicit in a rhyme like "lipstick" and "Irish spivick.") These set-piece songs are advertisements for abundance.

It says something for Porter's discipline that he was able to clamp down the cleverness from time to time and produce minimalist love-songs ("Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye") where the feeling and experience are not laid on verbally but supplied by the performer and listener together in that peculiar bonding of suggested and remembered experience. A song-lyric collection cannot help much here. It's the attention-getting virtuoso stuff that shouts from the page. Porter did not, perhaps, invest in the multitude of American vernaculars quite as wholeheartedly as he might have done, the call of Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne being stronger; but from time to time he would essay a rural ride. "Don't Fence Me In", however, his best in this line, turns out to have been very largely bought from a man called Fletcher (and for a song as well). Other fragments, like "Snagtooth Gerlie" ("Snagtooth Gerlie, will you be mine? / Your tooth it ain't so purty but it's gen-u-ine") remained unused – sensibly, I dare say, in the context of the time, though it seems a pity now. Porter's last song opens, touchingly, "Wouldn't it be fun not to be famous, / Wouldn't it be fun not to be rich! / Wouldn't it be pleasant / To be a simple peasant / And spend a happy day digging a ditch!" He and Coward were always writing things like this. They never believed it for a moment.

(and a good deal of overspending on his travels, abodes and friends) to reconcile himself to the fact that this arduous solo task, which he had most usefully practised at troop concerts, was going to have to be his until such time as outside rescue came (which finally it did, from the cinema).

The reason why Coward took so easily to the cabaret technique was not just that he was a habitual party performer among friends and colleagues; and a natural if dominating host; but that almost his entire repertoire spoke in his own voice, or in accents perfectly reconcilable with it: amiably patronizing, unsurprised, chiding, mock-intolerant, throwaway, slightly fearful of the eruption of "real" emotion. In "Dance, Little Lady", the "Little" is a characteristically lofty note (though no more characteristic, I'd say, than his robust music-hall mellow at the expense of older female as in "Mrs Worthington" or "We Must All Be Very Kind to Auntie Jessie"). His songs about matelots and boys to be mad about are notoriously unisex; he hardly wrote anything that he couldn't get away with singing himself.

Like Porter, Coward had a delight in preposterous rhyme – and, Freudians would doubt say, an anal disposition – which drew him naturally to lia-making, cataloguing.

Both The Who (*Before I Get Old: The Story of the Who by Dave Marsh*, 546pp. Plexus. £6.95. 0 85963 083 9) and The Doors (*The Doors – The Illustrated History*, 208pp. Vermilion £7.95. 0 09 153821 1) had their roots in black rhythm-and-blues. They were both "slaggies" bands, preferring three-minute records to the musically linked "concept" albums that became fashionable after The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper*. Alcohol claimed a victim from each band, Jim Morrison because he wanted more from life than rock-and-roll, Keith Moon (The Who's masterly drummer), because rock-and-roll was all that he did want. Both bands gave sensational concerts; Morrison's drunkenness electrifying or stupefying his audience as the mood took him, The Who making a habit of smashing their instruments on-stage.

The main difference between The Doors and The Who lay in the kind of audience that the bands attracted. The Who's original fans were the Mods, a contingent of sharply-dressed youths whose interests evolved around motor-scooters, amphetamines and the colour of their socks. They had no wish to alter society for it was from society that they earned or conned the money to enhance their life-style.

The Doors fans had their sights on higher things: they believed that the band, with its name taken from Huxley's *Doors of Perception*, had the answer to life itself.

What neither audience grasped was that it was being taken for a ride. The Who's projection of a Mod as a stuttering ("My Generation"), mother-dominated ("I'm a Boy") messed-up nobody (*Quadrophonia*) escaped its fans entirely. Similarly The Doors' audience mistook for genius Morrison's sophomoric acquaintance with symbolist literature. The Doors seem the superior of the two groups. Lyrics are more thoughtful, rhythm lighter, jazz and blues roots more deeply put down. By a quirk of fate The Who have had more influence; Almost every punk band pays lip-service to The Who.

Dave Marsh's *Before I Get Old* is exemplary; detailed, stimulating and musically analytical. Danny Sugerman's *Illustrated History* is glossy, superficial, and heavily reliant on photographs. Both books, informative on printed sources, lack a discography, which is an undeniable omission.

T.D.A.S.



# The grammar of descent

Michael Ruse

D.S. BENDALL (Editor)  
Evolution from Molecules to Men  
594pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.  
0521247535

It's as much fun being an evolutionist today as it was during the ten years after Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Although contemporary controversy is cast in slightly more modern terms (DNA and all that), basically it's the same old worries which continue to nag: adaptation and the design-like nature of organisms; the fossil record; and, above all, the status of our own species, *Homo sapiens*.

In the *Origin*, Darwin set himself two tasks. First he tried to make the idea of at least some form of evolution something a reasonable man could and should accept. In this attempt he was highly successful. Despite episcopal misgivings, within a short time indeed, reasonable men (and women) were all evolutionists. Where Darwin was somewhat less successful was in his second self-imposed task. He proposed a mechanism for the evolutionary process: natural selection. Starting from the Malthusian premise that organism numbers tend to outstrip resources, he argued that in the consequent struggle for existence the successful (or fitter) are thus "selected" as the parents of the next generation. Over the years, this winning process leads to full-blown evolution.

There were lots of reasons why Darwin's readers felt far less convinced of the adequacy of natural selection, than they had of evolution *per se*. Some of these reasons were theological. Could the hand and the eye – the greatest proofs of the Almighty's intervening Design – really be products of blind natural law? But there were also scientific objections to natural selection. Chief among these was the legitimate complaint that Darwin had no theory of heredity (of "genetics"), and that this, however effective selection may be, the normal processes of generation would render all gains null and void. It was not until the beginning of this century that an adequate theory of heredity was developed, and not until the 1930s that this theory was blended with selection to yield a happy, complete picture of the evolutionary process. At last, in the "synthetic theory of evolution" or "neo-Darwinism", biologists had what Thomas Kuhn has called a paradigm, a firm background against which they could work. And this state of affairs continued into the 1950s.

But as the 1950s drew to a close, neo-Darwinism began to show some very unparadigmatic-like characteristics. Tensions grew within, and pressures impinged from without. From being a staid, slightly old-fashioned area of biology, in the past quarter of a century evolutionary theory has become a very hot topic. Now scientific controversy calls inevitably for conferences, and 1982 was the hundredth anniversary of Charles Darwin's death, with the result that biologists of all stripes flew around the world to confer at length on things evolutionary. At times it was all rather like a travelling circus. (I know of three biologists who attended no less than ten such conferences each).

The most prestigious conference was that sponsored by Darwin College, Cambridge. There were a number of formats open to the organizers. They could have aimed at a gathering of leading evolutionists, intending simply to let all talk to each other about the latest research. Alternatively, they could have aimed at having biologists talking professionally to other biologists, not necessarily in their own field. Then they could have sponsored a conference aimed at the general public: how does Charles Darwin himself rate, and where stands evolutionary theory today? But, my feeling at the conference itself was that the organizers couldn't really make up their minds as to what they wanted, and, regrettably, this lack of direction is reflected in the conference proceedings contained in the volume under review.

Consequently, this is certainly not the right book for the general reader, looking for a relatively clear guide to evolutionary thought today. It is true that some of the contributions would suit well a reader perfectly, especially

the historical papers dealing with Darwin's own legacy. Ernst Mayr, in particular, having established himself as one of the founders of neo-Darwinism, now in his retirement shows himself equally talented as a historian. Also, Glynn Isaac's witty review of thinking on human evolution deserves mention, as do Anthony Hallam's thoughts on the evolutionary relevance of plate tectonics, and Bernard Williams's comments on the ultimate moral implications of evolutionary biology. But, for the most part, the general reader would find this volume hard going, and would do better to turn to one of the other collections published to mark the centenary.

I doubt whether specialists will get much from this volume either. They will prefer to turn to professional sources. But for a third class of reader, who probably knows quite a bit of science, and wants to find out why evolutionists are so excited about their subject at the moment, there is much to be learnt from *Evolution from Molecules to Men*. Let me pick out three areas of note.

First, must strongly, one feels the impact of molecular biology. In the 1950s, conventional biologists dreaded the double helix. It, and its implications, seemed to spell doom for those dealing with real organisms. Unless you could kill your subject and then blast it apart into the smallest particles, you apparently were not doing proper science. Evolutionary theory was little more than stamp-collecting, as one eminent molecular biologist put it. Now, as several contributions here show well, molecular biology is the vital search-light of the evolutionist, making brilliantly clear much that was hitherto unexplained and unanswerable. For instance, conventional evolutionists can say little or nothing about the ultimate origins of life, although their theory obviously poses questions in that direction. Today, knowing about the underlying structure of organisms, we are moving beyond speculation into testable hypothesis. This comes out clearly in Manfred Eigen's discussion of the possible origins of the basic templates of life, the ribonucleic acids (DNA and RNA).

Perhaps even more exciting is the way in which molecular biology gives answers to traditional problems. For instance, if Darwinism is correct, then even very slight selective advantages should lead to major evolutionary effects. But how does one test for slight advantages, given that accidental distortions from experiments might be far greater than anything one could hope to measure? Thanks to our understanding of the molecular mechanisms of heredity, such slight values can now be examined directly. And, in a *tour-de-force*, Eviatar Nevo of Haifa University exploits his small country's extraordinary ecological diversity – from mild sea-coast climate to harsh desert in just a few miles – to show that selection matters all the way. He and other contributors prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that if you find a difference between organisms, then you should look for Darwinian reasons for it.

A second area of excitement comes from work which centres on the fossil record, where it is argued that even though selection may have ecologically connected effects (as Nevo shows), over the long term selection is not all that crucial. In fact, even in the 1860s Darwin's critics argued that the record contains far too many gaps and abrupt transitions to support a gradual process of change. In other words, it negates the overall effectiveness of a process such as natural selection as supposed to be. This same refrain is sung by Stephen Jay Gould in his contribution, as he argues instead for his now-celebrated thesis of "punctuated equilibria". According to Gould, evolution involves long periods with little change, followed by rapid spurts when significant alterations occur – fox to dog, if not greater. Supposedly, these rapid changes – "saltations" – could not have been caused by natural selection. Darwin's mechanism, only, makes for those relatively minor differences (like skin colour) which don't show up in the fossil record.

More conventional Darwinians are not impressed by this argument, as Francisco Ayala's essay shows. First, there is the feeling that evolutionary questions really cannot be decided by the fossils – whatever Ayala may think – but that the "tough questions" and answers come from the study of the micro-

processes, as in genetics. I suspect myself, however, that although there is probably some truth in this criticism, a certain snobbery against "crude" subjects like palaeontology runs through the evolutionary approach (Ayala himself is a geneticist). After all, if we had no bridging fossils like *Archaeopteryx*, the bird-reptile, evolutionary studies would be much weakened.

Second, concerning punctuated equilibria, Ayala points out that much of the dispute over the fossil record is essentially semantic. Ten thousand years or more is but an instant to a palaeontologist, and any change occurring in that time is "very rapid". But ten thousand years to a fruit-fly geneticist, the evolutionist who cares directly about processes, is an almost infinite age, into which you can pack a vast amount of change. Hence, Ayala concludes – surely correctly – that much of the dispute about fossils is really about words. Neither side disputes the facts, that in (say) fifty thousand years you can get a lot of change. But, didn't we know this all along? Ayala thinks we did; although in Gould's defence, I would point out that it was a fact unjustly ignored, until palaeontologists started to make such a fuss about it.

A third area of controversy in evolutionary studies concerns behaviour, in so far as findings and conclusions apply to humans. Tremendous strides have been made in recent years in our understanding of the evolution of animal behaviour, as a fascinating paper here by T. H. Clutton-Brock on red deer bears out. Male and female red deer are different, physically and behaviourally, because what leads to evolutionary success for one sex is not necessarily that which leads to success for the other. Among the red deer, at least, biological equality does not imply biological identity.

## Excellence in exactness

John Roche

JOHN W. SHIRLEY  
Thomas Harriot: A Biography  
508pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
019822901

John Shirley's long-awaited biography of Thomas Harriot (1560–1621) is the outcome of almost forty years of devoted and meticulous labour in a notoriously unyielding subject area. Harriot the natural philosopher is in many respects a construct of the art of the historian. Some five thousand sheets of his manuscripts survive, largely because of his foresight in depositing them with the Earl of Northumberland, and they reveal that Harriot's work on mathematical navigation, pure mathematics and natural science was on a par with that of his greatest contemporaries on the Continent. Harriot's reserve, and his failure to publish his scientific work in his lifetime, meant that his influence on the mainstream of science has been slight. Harriot, nevertheless, is of considerable interest to the historian of science, because his life spans that period of ferment in England which brought into being a new excellence in the mathematical arts of navigation, surveying, cartography and instrument making, and a new style and vigour in natural philosophy.

The well-designed experiments of William Gilbert on magnetism and the lucid arguments of Francis Bacon on behalf of experimental science have impressed subsequent generations with the view that the dominant scientific method pursued in Early Modern England was that of the experimental philosophy. This was largely axiomatic, qualitative and inductive, and was strongly inspired by considerations of utility. The manuscripts of Harriot reveal, however, that the complementary pole of exact science – mathematical postulation applied to artefacts and to natural phenomena, controlled by experimental craftsmanship and precise numerical measurement, and motivated mainly by intellectual curiosity – was cultivated just as assiduously during the same period. Just Harriot published his researches on mathematical navigation, optics, projectiles and astronomy; this dual character of the new science would have been established in print in England as early, if not earlier, than it was on the Continent.

But people today seem just as far apart on the topic of *Homo sapiens* as they were in the time of T. H. Huxley. In this volume, as elsewhere, the Harvard entomologist and sociobiologist, Edward O. Wilson, moves in and applies biology directly to humans. We may be made in God's image, but we are also the products of evolution through natural selection. For instance, why don't brothers sleep with sisters? Because such inbreeding has horrendous biological consequences. Hence, there has been selection of instincts against incest. Opposing Wilson in this volume, again as elsewhere, other leading biologists argue that when it comes to humans, the biological rules don't count. Thus Patrick Bateson speaks of ideas on incest being "wildly over-interpreted", and of conclusions "unofficially accepted", and of the "intellectually shoddy" treatment of counter-evidence.

What is to be said in conclusion? I have been of the opinion that conferences, if they are to be remembered at all, should be marked by a group photograph rather than by a published volume of proceedings, whose contributions are seldom, if ever, refereed properly. Even in essays from the most distinguished contributors, this lack of response to critical comment shows through. If nothing else, such refereeing might weed out the truly awful (to be found in the volume under review, as elsewhere).

But if one asks, one hundred years after his death, whether Darwin really merits such a volume in his honour the answer is yes indeed. Not only did he change the nineteenth century; but, right or wrong, as the twentieth century draws towards its end, his legacy is still the source of some of life's most fascinating and important questions.

Harriot's patrons, Raleigh and Henry Percy, the 9th Earl of Northumberland, involved him in many of the great dramas and tragedies of late Tudor and early Stuart England. Harriot was one of Raleigh's settlers in the short-lived Roanoke Colony in Virginia in 1585, and subsequently in Munster. He prepared navigational tables and instruments for Raleigh's voyage of 1594 in search of El Dorado. He was accused with Raleigh of atheism, and his name was linked with the ill-fated Christopher Marlowe and with Thomas Kyd. He was interrogated and imprisoned in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Although he was quickly released, Harriot's close association with his two great patrons, both now in the Tower, compelled him to keep a low profile for the rest of his life. Professor Shirley's exhaustive search of the literary remains of the period brings all of those and many more events to life in a wealth of detail.

Shirley has also set himself the formidable task of introducing an equally rigorous historical scholarship to Harriot's scientific biography. This demands a considerable expertise in contemporary navigation, geography, cartography, gunnery, hydraulics, alchemy, astronomy, mechanics, optics, mathematics and astronomy, such was the scope of Harriot's interests and involvements. While admitting Shirley's courage in attempting it, the specialist in some of these fields may feel at times that the quality of the analysis is not always sustained. Nevertheless, one is bound to applaud Shirley's ability to explain technical matters in an accessible, coherent and non-technical language.

Historians will be impressed by the large number of contemporary references to Harriot that Shirley has managed to unearth, and by his exhaustive analysis of the background to every documented event in Harriot's life. Although Harriot the person remains as elusive as ever, the circumstances which impinged on him are brought out more vividly and convincingly than in any previous biography. Harriot's work will also recognize that Professor Shirley has solved innumerable problems concerning Harriot's employment and movements, and that his work was clearly the fruit of long hours of pondering over carefully collated sources. This biography will serve biologists and others with a wide range of interests for many years to come. It is a landmark in Harriot scholarship.

## Hard times on the terracing

Paul Smith

PHIL SOAR and MARTIN TYLER  
Encyclopedia of British Football  
246pp. Collins Willow. £7.95.  
0002180499  
BRIAN WOOLNOUGH  
Black Magic: England's Black Footballers  
186pp. Panther. Paperback, £4.95.  
0720114761  
SIMON INGLIS  
The Football Grounds of England and Wales  
272pp. Collins Willow. £9.95.  
0002180243

Reading this clutch of books, one wonders whether Britannia United might not make an even better image of our discontents than Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital*. The draughty arena built to accommodate the crowds and express the corporate pride of more confident days, where the stark terraces of a spartan past confront the cantilever follies which are converting penury into bankruptcy by way of *folie de grandeur*, and the ageing, the boozing, and the unemployed assemble in declining strength to watch with waning enthusiasm the antics of the overpaid – what a theme for allegory!

The problems of falling attendances, swelling debts, violence, too much television and simply too much football loom large in Phil Soar and Martin Tyler's survey of the contemporary game in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of British Football*. Their introductory chapters afford a wide and well illustrated, if repetitive, panorama of the development of the national game, its major competitions, and its forays abroad, but the heart of the work is its 150 pages of reference material covering the clubs and the league tables and cup and international results since 1871. This is a good buy at the price, especially for the clubs' colours and the ease of access to their league and cup records, but it lacks some desirable features to be found elsewhere – club crests, managers, and ground-plans, previous names and grounds, full Cup Final teams, and lists of international caps.

Soar and Tyler's rather apprehensive review of football's future is hardly counteracted by Brian Woolnough's effort to discern a new source of energy in what he acidly terms "the black explosion". This is a "standard set of questions plus tape-recorder equals book" production engagingly demonstrating the sports journalist's no doubt genuine conviction that the game is played for his benefit and indeed exists mainly by virtue of his efforts. Mr Woolnough was clearly amazed to be told on ringing Clitheroe Crooks at home in the evening, that "he didn't like talking to the press in his leisure time". Shocked readers will be relieved to know that Garth has since redeemed this unprofessional foul by working his way up to a weekly chat show on Capital Radio, thus honouring the great truth that chatting is the name of the game. Little bit colour and a common experience of prejudice seems to unite the black players interviewed here. Woolnough thinks most of them want to "prove that a majority of coloured people in Great Britain are respectful, polite, and well-mannered citizens", but this exemplary meekness is evidently not going to help them achieve the respect of the England team that he is looking for, since he reports Bobby Robson as wanting John Barnes to "put his shoulder in and show opponents that he is around."

Simon Inglis is concerned not with the playability but with the stage. His is the indispensable book for the enthusiast who means to go to number of contemporary references to Harriot that Shirley has managed to unearth, and by his exhaustive analysis of the background to every documented event in Harriot's life. Although Harriot the person remains as elusive as ever, the circumstances which impinged on him are brought out more vividly and convincingly than in any previous biography. Harriot's work will also recognize that Professor Shirley has solved innumerable problems concerning Harriot's employment and movements, and that his work was clearly the fruit of long hours of pondering over carefully collated sources. This biography will serve biologists and others with a wide range of interests for many years to come. It is a landmark in Harriot scholarship.

1875, and their elegant 1906 Grand Stand survives, though it is not the oldest still in use – Inglis records that honour to Gillingham's Gordon Road stand. Bulwer Lytton wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii* in the original Craven Cottage, where Fulham's pitch now lies. Michael Davitt laid the first turf at Celtic Park, and Sir Frank Benson's company performed Shakespeare on Gay Meadow. Inglis rescues football's most influential if rather unimaginative architect, Archibald Leitch, from oblivion, and writes the obituaries of grounds that are gone, for those whom Accrington Stanley is a name of mystery and enchantment. He is a clock, crest, gable and flagpole man when it comes to adding a touch of colour to the utilitarian drabness of most grounds, and is not afraid of stating his preferences – the Shay is probably the least comfortable ground, Elm Park the least interesting. Despite his advocacy of improvements, this is a nostalgic, even romantic book, breathing the sense that the true experience of watching football can never be had behind the reflective glass of the executive box, but only on cinder terracing in the rain, with the scent of bronchial balsam and Waadblines in the air.

## Fast talk from the corner

Vernon Scannell

ANGELO DUNDEE  
I Only Talk Winning: Own Story as told to Mike Winters  
263pp. Arthur Barker. £8.50.  
0213168812

Good books about the fight game, whether fact or fiction, are very rare indeed, and *I Only Talk Winning* is not one of them. The unpretentious, ghosted autobiographies of well-known boxers are usually adequately transcribed and the clichés of style and attitude are less likely to offend than be reassuringly familiar to the readers for whom they are intended. A. J. Liebling and our own Hugh MacLynne have produced some first-rate journalism; Hemingway, in his short story "Fifty Grand", and a little-known American called W. O. Heinz in a novel, *The Professional*, have written better boxing fiction than anyone else I know of. The notion that Norman Mailer writes well about the sport is not entirely true: he has some knowledge of the game but he melodramatizes the violence and inherent theatricality, so that a brutal sentimentality vitiates the tough realism he is striving for.

Angelo Dundee's "Own story as told to Mike Winters" is a very odd concoction. The jacket carries beneath the title and description the legend "Dundee might be the greatest manager of all time – Muhammad Ali". But then, he might not, and certainly there is nothing in this book to suggest that he could be. Presumably Dundee would not have been hired or retained as manager by such champions as Luis Rodriguez, José Napoles, Sugar Ramos, and Willie Pastrano, far less Muhammad Ali and Ray Leonard, had he not been an unusually astute mentor and "corner man". A corner man might be the fighter's manager or trainer or both: he is the fellow who doring a contest supplies succour and counsel and is skilled at treating troublesome swellings and cuts which might impede his fighter's vision. But *I Only Talk Winning* contains virtually no serious consideration of the techniques, the skills, the fascination, ethics and morality of boxing. Instead there is a Jakey Runyonesque attempt to present a Jakey Runyonesque character, wisecracking, worldly, tough but good-natured, loyal, generous to a fault, and very modest. Not easy when writing in the first person.

Dundee's ghost writer, the blurb tells us, is a former comedian who, with his brother, Bernie, once topped the bill at the London Palladium but has for the last five years lived in Florida where he is "now working behind the scenes in stage production and management." He also runs his own agency for theatrical and sports personalities, among them his close friend Angelo Dundee. "I cannot help wondering, if, with the pressure of all his business interests, Mike Winters was not obliged to hire

## Sunny days in the scorebox

A. L. Le Quesne

JACK POLLARD  
Australian Cricket: The Game and the Players  
1162pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £19.95.  
0340287969  
R. S. WHITTINGTON  
Keith Miller: The Golden Nugget  
312pp. Souvenir Press. £8.95.  
0285625829

*Australian Cricket* is an immensely painstaking, immensely informative, and in some respects rather limited, labour both of love and integrity, and it demands respect accordingly. It would be better titled *A Dictionary of Australian Cricket* for in fact that is what it is, a series of alphabetical entries starting at Abandoned Matches and ending at Zimbalis. Anthony George, a leg-spinner who took 49 wickets for Australia at an average of 39.12 between 1933 and 1939; lightly lie the turf upon him. For the most part, it is a biographical dictionary. There are entries for every Australian Test player, down to the utterly improbable Tasmanian, Edwin Burn, who came in the 1890 Australian touring team to England be-

cause the great Blackham insisted on his inclusion as his deputy wicket-keeper. Burn joined the party on the wharf at Adelaide with the comment, "Here I am – but I have never kept wicket in my life" (he never did, but nevertheless played in the Lord's Test, broke the handle of his bat while taking guard and was then bowled first ball). There are also entries for a good many other first-class players who never achieved Test Match status, together with non-Australians like Garfield Sobers and Colin Milburn who have played for Australian State sides. It is a fair criticism of the book that, given the dictionary form, the criteria for inclusion are very imprecise, for it stops well short of the logical line of containing entries for all Australian first-class players.

This applies even more strongly to the non-biographical items, which are fairly arbitrary: they include excellent articles on – for instance – the Australian Cricket Board and its predecessors, an adequate although very cramped summary of the bodyline affair, interesting surveys of the development of cricket in each of the Australian States, necessarily impressionistic articles on Australian batting and Australian bowling, which in effect recapitulate much that appears in the biographical entries, the complete text of the current Laws of Cricket and an unpredictable scatter of miscellaneous articles on such diverse topics as Aboriginal Cricketers, Tied Matches and Throwing; yet readers will look in vain for articles on Barracking or Cricket Broadcasting or Crowds. Matters are not made easier by the absence of both index and list of contents, so that the only way of finding whether a given topic has been included or not is to guess how it might be described and search alphabetically for the point in question.

The truth is that Jack Pollard has tried to write two books at once, a biographical dictionary of great Australian cricketers and a history of Australian cricket, and has inevitably fallen some way between the two stools. Nevertheless, my final judgment, on this book must be one of resounding admiration. It represents an astonishing compilation of accurate information which will be invaluable to all future students of the game; particularly on the players of the pre-1914 era, on whom information is usually less easy to come by and where there is none of the muffling of appraisal which is inevitable when living players are being discussed. Articles like those on Trumper and Spofforth, or on such less known figures as Midwinter – the only man to have played for both England and Australia against each other – could hardly be bettered.

It is probably safe to say that, in the post-Second World War era, no Australian cricketer has made a greater impact by reason of both personality and performance, than Keith Miller. Certainly nobody of my generation is likely to forget the way that this tall, magnificently built figure with a mane of black hair forever being impatiently tossed aside, burst like a bombshell on the cricket-hungry crowds of 1946 with a series of splendidly forceful and debonair innings alternating with lethally aggressive spells of fast bowling. Miller was one of the few first-class cricketers whose personality carried easily, on first bounce so to speak, to the boundary and the crowds beyond. It is one of the best features of R. S. Whittington's full and affectionate biography of his friend that that personality comes through: it is a personality that owed so much to the war years and to Miller's distinguished record as a Mosquito pilot, and that perhaps in cricketing terms found its happiest expression in those Victory Tests of 1946. Miller was never fully at ease with the Australian cricketing establishment, and in particular not with its most distinguished representative, Bradman. In the years that followed he never became captain of Australia, as he might so easily have done, and he never broke the records, made the thousands of runs or took the hundreds of wickets; that might have been expected of him; he was pre-eminently the man of the great occasion, not of the record books. It is hard to read Mr Whittington's book without sympathizing with Miller or feeling that he had got his values right, and that the Test cricket of the last generation would have been a better game if the Millers of this world had had more to do with the shopping of it.



# The march of the buboes

John Hatcher

ROBERT S. GOTTFRIED  
*The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe*  
203pp. Collier Macmillan. £14.95.  
002 9126304

The influence of the Black Death lingers on: a widespread fascination with the massive mid-fourteenth-century epidemic continues to result in a steady flow of books and articles. In the past fifteen years, for example, there have been three books in English with the same title as R. S. Gottfried's present volume, each written with an almost identical intention of surveying the impact of the Black Death on European society. Moreover, the arrival of Professor Gottfried's work coincided with an attempt (featured in a programme in BBC 2's *Time-watch* series) by a zoologist, G. I. Twigg, to question the conventional wisdom that it was bubonic and pneumonic plague which swept the known world in the 1340s.

Such involvement is fully justified, since the Black Death was an event of profound significance in the development of Europe, and consequently it features prominently in a number of important historical disputes. A lively scholarly debate continues to flourish between those who believe, along with William Stubbs, that the Black Death merely accelerated for a time changes which were already well under way, and those who suspect that the death of upwards of a third of the population, and the ushering in of a long era of low and declining population, inevitably produced frictions and distortions which materially assisted in the formulation of new social structures and relationships. Another dispute centres on whether increased mortality was an exogenous or endogenous factor: whether it was created by the growing imbalance between people and resources in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and was thus the direct and inevitable consequence of severe overpopulation, or whether enhanced mortality was primarily due to changes in the pattern and virulence of disease, dependent in turn upon such natural phenomena as the mutation of bacilli and changes in climate. In the behaviour of insects and rodents and suchlike. Put another way, was the Black Death a Malthusian agent, punishing society for its demographic excesses and curbing its problems by reducing numbers, or was it the result of changes, unconnected with, or only loosely connected with, human actions?

Or to put it another way still: what kind the greatest effect on the decline of feudalism, the crisis of overpopulation, the rise of the money economy, the internal contradictions and conflicts within feudalism itself, or a bacillus living in the stomachs of fleas on the backs of marmots, suikis and targabons in the remote steppelands of central Asia?

On these and related issues, of great interest and importance to those concerned with long-term changes and their causes, Gottfried's book offers little of substance. For it adopts a narrative rather than an analytical approach, and even on this level spends much of its time skating lightly over the surface. In truth it adds little to Philip Ziegler's study of the same title, published in 1969, and in many respects falls below the standards of accuracy and erudition which Ziegler embodied. In his modest but in some ways impressive book, Ziegler expresses the hope that his work might "chance to provoke some academic historian, incensed by its inadequacy into engaging in a major work of scholarship". It is manifest that Gottfried was not so incited; rather, he looks certain to incense academic historians far more successfully than his predecessor. For, strangely, the Black Death seems to afflict many contemporary researchers and writers in very much the same way as it did the survivors of the great mortality in the mid-fourteenth century, namely by inducing such a severe state of shock that normal standards of behaviour and judgement are abandoned. In this instance we have an established historian producing a book which, although well within his area of specialism, is markedly below the standard of his previous work. With Dr Twigg, as with Professor Shrewsbury before him (*A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*, 1970), we have a

scientist tackling the history of his subject with little of the skill, caution or application that he customarily adopts in the laboratory.

Gottfried's book frequently displays a disappointing lack of discrimination in its presentation of evidence, and it is peppered with errors, a number of them serious. All too often his method seems to be to gather whatever information he can from whatever source in order to throw light on the matter under scrutiny; thereby failing to pay sufficient heed to its validity or authenticity. Thus eye-witness accounts written soon after the event are lumped with second-hand reports written a generation or so later, and death-rates and population totals are gathered from only authority prepared to hazard them, frequently without sufficient attention to matters of plausibility or comparability. For example, we are told with assurance that Europe's "population had increased about 300% from the tenth to the mid-thirteenth century to 75-80 million, higher than it had been for close to a thousand years".



An interlaced human figure from Early Medieval Designs by Eva Wilson (128pp, with 100pp of fine drawings). British Museum Publications. 07141 8056 4. £4.95.

## King Norman the Second

R. H. C. Davis

FRANK BARLOW  
*William Rufus*  
484pp. Methuen. £15.  
0413281701

William Rufus is one of the newsworthy kinks of English history, but public interest and curiosity have concentrated not so much on his life as on his death. This is because he was killed in suspicious circumstances while hunting in the New Forest. Was the fatal arrow really shot by Walter Tirel, and was it shot by accident or by design of the king's brother, who succeeded him as Henry I? No chronicler made any accusation at the time, but nearly all of them elaborated on the event in some way, claiming that the king's death had been foretold to various holy men in visions, or alleging that his corpse was transported to Winchester on a cart, dripping blood the whole way, and noting that in the following year the tower of the cathedral collapsed on to his tomb. Elaborate theories have been built on these stories, and accusations of witchcraft have been added to those of murder. They have been refuted repeatedly, as by Professor Hollister in 1973, but in this definitive biography Frank Barlow does well to refute them again.

This is one of the few points on which Barlow is in agreement with Edward Augustus Freeman, who produced, 101 years ago, the only other full-length study of the reign. Freeman disapproved of Rufus as an "irreligious tyrant and a homosexual but thought his reign important. Barlow takes exactly the opposite point of view. He likes Rufus, thinks his "tyranny" nothing more than normal for the age, and defends him at length against the charge of bias.

yet when the sceptical reader checks the footnote he will find the following perplexingly naive statement: "Medievalists are usually reluctant to give population figures. One who is not is Carlo Cipolla, and the figures have been taken from his *Before the Industrial Revolution*." With his appetite for recounting the most bizarre forms of behaviour claimed by the sensationalist contemporary observers of the aftermath of the pestilence, Gottfried resembles Johannes Nohl, whose *The Black Death* was published in Potsdam in 1924; when from time to time this predilection leads him astray the resemblance is closer to Monty Python, as when he tells us that at the height of the epidemic in the town of Bibais "some roads had so many bodies piled along their sides that bandits took to utilizing them to conduct their ambushes".

I will list here only a few of Gottfried's blatant misstatements and misconceptions. The "purplish blotches" caused by subcutaneous haemorrhaging are not called buboes (p8); buboes are swellings of the lymphatic glands. Mortality and morbidity are not synonyms (*passim*); the mortality rate is the death-rate, whereas the morbidity rate is the sick rate. There was no "astounding decline" in agricultural productivity on the estates of the bishop of Winchester before 1300; the figures summoned in support of this contention are false (p25). The Peasants' Revolt did not mark the end of "statutes or ordinances fixing wages or limiting mobility" (p102); on the contrary, such statutes were reiterated throughout the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. It can scarcely be true both that in Europe "population levels by the 1340s were almost as high as they had been at the turn of the fourteenth century" (p30) and that "in much of the Christian world, the Black Death struck an already declining population" (p38). It is extremely eccentric to argue that "by 1530, the English population was about the same as it had been before the Black Death" (p156); most informed commentators would place it around 50 per cent below the 1300 level. Less categorical but no less insidious is the heavy measure of *post hoc propter hoc* reasoning in Chapter 7, "Disease and the Transformation of

Medieval Europe", in which the Black Death and later population decline is proposed as a cause or "the cause" of revolutionary developments in a plethora of fields, ranging from literature, academic life and the arts, through government and politics, to science, technology and medicine. In addition this chapter repeats a large number of hoary old myths connected with the contention that the Black Death wiped out the practitioners of a wide range of skills and accomplishments, who proved to be irreplaceable. Thus "a large proportion of Europe's master masons" were killed, "the survivors were too few to train enough new craftsmen, and too few even to do much of the skilled work so characteristic of preplague Gothic architecture. The result was a general decline in architectural standards which would not be rectified until the late fifteenth century." The truth is that in this and many other areas the demand-side response was as important, if not more so, than the supply side. In other words post-plague society had a changed set of priorities and demands which in this instance led to new architectural forms, and the decorations which were applied to them.

Happily, there are parts of the book which offer interesting and valuable viewpoints. A thread which runs throughout the work is a welcome attention to environmental and biological factors. Too often disease is seen by historians as a matter of the human element alone, in the neglect of the micro-organisms which cause it and the vectors and their hosts which are often responsible for spreading it. The incidence of a particular disease like plague can depend to a considerable extent upon the behaviour of fleas and rodents, as well as upon climate. A chapter on the response of medical authorities to plague adds a dimension sometimes lacking in general works on the Black Death.

Yet this remains a deeply disappointing book, and we still await a convincing scholarly attempt to knit the ever-growing series of excellent local and particular studies into a comprehensive account of the impact of the world outbreak of disease in recorded European history.

phemy and homosexuality, preferring to see him as merely rumbustious. Freeman thought the reign important because he believed that it was Rufus and his minister, Ranulf Flambard, who introduced the feudal system into England and divided the land into fiefs owing knight-service and the full range of feudal "incidents", such as reliefs, wardships and escheats, but his theory has so long been refuted, that Barlow does not even refer to it. It is a little surprising, however, that he does not discuss R. W. Southern's view of the importance of the reign, and of Flambard in particular, for the development of the royal administration and the systemization of writs such as *novel disseisin*. As it is, Barlow's claim is simply that "the importance of the reign is that it prevented the reign of Robert Curthose and assured the reign of Henry I".

Nevertheless, Barlow has written a very full life running to about 450 pages. Since Rufus was only about forty years of age when he died, and had reigned for only thirteen years, this length may in some ways seem excessive, but the truth is that Barlow's book is a great deal more than a life. One of its delights is the way in which the narrative frequently becomes discursive, so that (for example) the chapter on William's "Background and Youth" turns into a general discussion of the upbringing of noble and royal youths in this period. In addition the third, fourth and fifth chapters are not narratives at all but discussions of the manners and customs of the royal household, of the nobility, clergy and royal government, and of finance. In these discussions Barlow refuses to be inhibited by the chronological limits of the reign (1067-1100), discussing finance in the light of Domesday Book (1086) and the Pipe Roll of 1130, and the royal household in the light of the *Constitutio Domus Regis*, on which he provides the best commentary available anywhere, although its date is c.1136. The one subject

which he does confine to the limits of the reign is the church. This may be because it is only four years since he published his history of *The English Church, 1066-1154*, but the restriction has the effect of truncating the career of Archbishop Anselm (whom Barlow dislikes) and of making it difficult for the reader to see how his actions could have constituted part of a larger scheme.

This book is not for the general reader who wants to know more about Death in the Forest. It is an important study of the Anglo-Norman monarchy and the climax of Professor Barlow's work: an eleventh and twelfth-century Englishman's view of the importance of the reign, and of Flambard in particular, for the development of the royal administration and the systemization of writs such as *novel disseisin*. As it is, Barlow's claim is simply that "the importance of the reign is that it prevented the reign of Robert Curthose and assured the reign of Henry I".

## Letters

### Newspeak

Sir, - Roy Harris, in his article "The misunderstanding of Newspeak" (January 6), refers to "two 1983 examples where the concept of Newspeak is invoked", and goes on to discuss an article by myself, and one by Friedrich von Hayek, both from the features page of *The Times*. His justification for doing this is that both articles are introduced by a title referring to "Newspeak". It should perhaps be pointed out that neither article mentions this concept, nor does the larger version of Hayek's article, printed in the *Salisbury Review*, no 5. Professor Harris ought to know that titles in newspapers are chosen not by contributors, but by editors.

This would not matter, were it not for the fact that the reference to Newspeak enables Harris to brand both Hayek and myself (although not in terms of equal rudeness) with the charge of using Orwell's idea in order to simplify complex discussions, and to beg important questions. Harris writes as though we wish to win arguments by branding our opponents - using the word "Newspeak" as a piece of Newspeak, so to speak, in the way that the Novosti Press Agency uses the word "imperialist". This is not so. The fault lies rather with Harris, who uses the labels "left" and "right" with no consciousness that they misrepresent almost all serious political options, and who imagines himself to be arguing against something which he calls the "conservative, reactionary inspiration of the majority of 'indignant letter writers'". It is surely this kind of facile lobel-mangling, for which "reactionary" is the Pavlovian sequel to "conservative", and which seeks to identify opponents through caricature, that Orwell had in mind. Besides, as one of the principal causes of indignant letters in *The Times*, I can assure Harris that the times have changed.

Professor Harris is of course right to dismiss the idea that there might be a language of "plain representation". But many of us who have criticized the politicization of language by communists and feminists (to take two major instances) have not sought to argue that "plain representation" could ever be achieved. Our concern has been with the extent to which questions are begged, and discussions closed, by politically motivated changes in terminology. Harris acknowledges the existence of such a phenomenon. But if he wishes to acquire a conception of the disaster that it has entailed in the lives of ordinary people, he should look again at the society which inspired Orwell's original image of the future. He might usefully compare the language of the features page of *Private* with that of the features page of *The Times*.

ROGER SCRUTON,  
6 Landon Gardens, London W2.

### Orwell and his Publishers

Sir, - With reference to Michael Sheldon's article on Orwell and his publishers in your issue of January 6, your readers may be interested to know that in a television interview I asked Victor Gollancz whether he regretted having turned down *Animal Farm*, one of the very few books of our time sure to survive as classic, in his case alongside *Gulliver's Travels*. He replied, more straightforwardly than I had anticipated, that as a publisher he regretted having refused to publish so distinguished a book, but that as a man of the Left he felt he had been justified in believing that a number of other publishers for one reason or another turned down *Animal Farm*, among them Faber on the advice of T. S. Eliot.

### The Oakes Case

Sir, - James Leasor should have read his own words, and my review, more carefully. The "two serious factual errors" he discovers (January 6) are nothing of the kind. I said that Marshall, Mr Leasor's Mafia agent, "struggles to be [Oakes] to be dragged, and accused by [Oakes] to be outside 'Nassau'". This is exactly what happens, as described on page 162 of the book. About the second point,

relating to the bloodstained towel found in Harold Christie's bedroom by Major Pemberton, head of the local CID, a fact which I said was omitted, Mr Leasor is disingenuous when he says that he does mention the towel. So he does, but only in recounting Christie's evidence at the trial. He does not mention Pemberton's discovery of the towel, nor what I call "his strange forgetfulness about this in the Magistrates' Court hearing". By the time of the trial Christie had had time to get off the hook by providing an explanation, saying "I wet a towel and wiped his face. I believe the towel came from my bathroom."

For the rest, the facts Mr Leasor mentions provide no link between the principals in the case and the murder. All that is pure conjecture. The point of mentioning Marshall Haus's book was to show that the Leasor theory, so far as it concerned an agent of Meyer Lansky bearing chief responsibility for Oakes's death, was not original.

### Raymond Aron

Sir, - Douglas Johnson erroneously begins his review (December 9, 1983) of my father, Raymond Aron's *Memoirs* with a reference to "his old friend from the 1930s", Bertrand de Jouvenel. Bertrand de Jouvenel and my father belonged to very different social and political milieus in the 1930s. Their relations began after the Second World War.

### Judging Brecht

Sir, - Timothy Garton Ash, judging Brecht", said the cover of your issue of December 9. What would this mean, I wondered? Was this latest recruit to the vast army of writers on the subject about to discuss broad problems of Brecht criticism, or would he be reviewing judgments made in Ronald Hayman's new book? Was it Hayman or the whole lot of us who would prove to be the judges in question? It soon turned out to be neither. The gentleman in the long wig was Timothy Garton Ash.

The judgment which he handed down on us was a very long one, almost 120 inches (ten feet). It was not a review of the book, which was only aparsely referred to. Nor was it more than marginally a consideration of Brecht's achievement as poet, playwright and man of the theatre. Four-fifths of it (about eight feet by my count) concerned that great artist's pre-announced political views, statements and actions.

This sense of proportion will be familiar to anyone who was around at the time of the Cold War, when the Congress for Cultural Freedom (with CIA backing) systematically tried to discredit Brecht via *Der Monat*, *Forum*, *Encounter* and others of its stable of magazines. But a lot has happened since those glorious days, and maybe there is something new to say. Almost of the outset Ash leads one to assume that there must be, since he reprimands Hayman for taking no account of the last, posthumously published volume of Brecht's poems, which appeared in 1982. Since this could well have been after Hayman's book went to press, the reader is led to think that Ash himself believes in being very up to date indeed.

Alas, this belief is not put into practice in the article, which exhumes one thirty-year-old allegation after another without looking at the other. So we have Brecht once again "enthroned [sic] in East Berlin, with a West German publisher, Austrian passport and Swiss bank account", as if this were still proof of unbelievable depravity. We have the "famous" alleged remark to Sidney Hook about the Moscow Trials, though it is now clear that it was made before the end of 1935, when the Great Purge and the show trials were still to come; nobody accustomed to Brecht finds it all that significant, though it would be interesting to know in what language it was made. We have the old, old view that *The Measures Taken* "uncannily anticipates the Moscow trials", without reference to the Japanese context of self-sacrifice on which it was in fact based. We have Brecht in his last years presented as, in part, a "hopeless hack" who "wrote to order". Any evidence? No.

In all ten feet (three metres) of Mr Ash's judgment there was just one startlingly unfamiliar point, though with no indication of provenance or date. This was the suggestion that Brecht was offered - by whom? - a job with the Moscow Art Theatre, but preferred not "to risk his own neck". Does your reviewer not know enough about Brecht's theatrical principles to realize what a very odd idea this is? Surely it didn't come from Ronald Hayman? And why say "his own" neck unless one wishes to imply that he would have risked somebody else's? Whose judicial standards are these?

JOHN WILLET.

Volta House, Windmill Hill, London NW3.

### Learned Journals

Sir, - Marilyn Butler's brief (December 16, 1983) was clearly an impossible one, as she could hardly mention all literary journals itemized in the *MLA Directory of Periodicals*. Yet we poor benighted aliens feel that less than justice has been rendered to the small but hardy band of Continental periodicals devoted to the study of "Anglistik und Amerikanistik" as our German colleagues put it. As editor of *Études Anglaises*, I can testify that ours is a weary struggle for yearly survival against the indifference or insidious hostility of higher educational authorities at present more interested in promoting the study of English for vocational purposes than the apparently futile scrutiny of literary works.

"Culture" is fast becoming an obscene word, and many so-called intellectuals reach for their revolvers when it is daringly mentioned, especially when not dealing with such modish topics as comic strips, pop songs or graffiti in public lavatories. May I suggest that, before we are all swept away by the tidal wave of scientific barbarism, the TLS take some notice of Continental literary journals? Let us hope that this census won't turn into a threnody for defunct periodicals.

PAUL-OABRIEL BOUCE.

36 Avenue Rabalais, 92160 Antony, France.

Sir, - It can be well understood why to the Yale historian (Linda Colley, writing on history journals in your symposium of December 16, 1983) *Antiquity* should be seen as "marvellous". Probably nothing quite like its individuality and personal touch exists in any of the journals surveyed or unsurveyed by Professor Colley, on this or the other side of the Atlantic. It is salutary to recall that *Antiquity* was the unique creation of one man nearly sixty years ago, when archaeology was a gentlemanly study hardly yet besmirched by professionalism, and the survival of its exceptional character resulted from continuous control by that same creator, O. G. S. Crawford, for thirty years. He was open-minded, receptive to ideas, a "lateral" thinker. Because of his early geographical orientation he could associate widely dispersed archaeological facts without continually looking over his shoulder for heretical implications of extreme diffusionism. His discovery of archaeology "from the air" through the use of the aeroplane sixty years ago might have influenced his general outlook.

If the *Antiquity* of the years since Crawford continues to have a similar personal and intimate atmosphere, that again must be put down to the pervasive influence of one man, its editor since. One has to admit, however, that the cheerful latitudinarianism of Crawford's reign has waned under the baleful influences of "scientific" archaeology, radio-carbon dating and the scramble for priorities in mankind's early cultural achievements. It may be suspected that Crawford's wide-ranging perspective, seen in his essay in comparative ethno-prehistory, *The Eye Goddess*, would have received short shrift under the present dispensation.

C. E. JOEL

47 Spencer Close, Potters, Bedfordshire

### Milovan Djilas

Sir, - Although Djilas can claim literacy as well as political importance. Readers of this sentence in my review of Stephen Clissold's book on Djilas (December 30, 1983) may think me insufferably condescending. The word should be "literary" - a correction which I made in proof, but which failed to reach the published print.

R. K. KINDERSLEY.

St Antony's College, Oxford.

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# COMMENTARY

## A martyr mismanaged

Richard Combs

Gorky Park  
Leicester Square Theatre

Denied permission by the Soviet Union to film in the places where it happened, the adaptors of Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park* found a stand-in for Moscow in another capital of the frozen North, Helsinki. The substitution would be acceptable enough were it not for two things. The most obvious is that Cruz Smith's novel depends less on the mechanics of its plot to hook the reader than on the circumstantial evidence of his many years' research, his feeling for the topography of Moscow and the texture of Russian life, the latter tinged with an anti-Soviet disdain that just about passes for the drabness and pessimism that is *de rigueur* in this genre wherever it is set. But, following from this, the film-makers have attempted a kind of pretend-realism, as if Helsinki were not just a substitute but Moscow-in-absentia, a setting we are encouraged to accept as the real thing while not being given enough detail to convince us that anything is real. The problem is essentially one of style, or rather the lack of it. The director Michael Apted points a wide-angle lens indiscriminately at faces in conversation or figures in a crowd, as if a certain kind of TV roughness were enough to cover the basic contradiction of Helsinki-for-Moscow, or of accepting a Slavic cast in this undeniably Western-style policier.

The curious thing is that, according to an article in a recent *Sunday Times Magazine*, screenwriter Dennis Potter did have a definite stylistic model in mind. Potter characterized his source novel as a fat book which had "waddled into the bestseller lists". He then described his programme for stripping away the flab, having first determined that his subject should ideally cut the trim, fast-moving figure of classic detective fiction, that the mean streets down which the Soviet policeman hero must go should have an immediately identifiable, archetypal atmosphere, turning Moscow into another of Los Angeles's endless suburbs. This sounds fine in theory, but Potter has been unable to make the regimen work on screen, and his script really has no atmosphere at all. Disgruntled comments on Russian life jostle with baffled, over-emphatic stabs at describing such things as the rivalry between the KGB and

the civil police. The inertness of the writing is weirdly compounded by that peculiar trick of casting which has English character actors substitute for Russian "colour", as if making Russian militiamen, for instance, sound like the Z Cars squad room were a short-cut to international credibility.

It could be that so circumstantial a novel as *Gorky Park* resists the imposition of any stylistic model, as if what Cruz Smith had really achieved was a cunning marriage of the mechanics of detective fiction, distorting the latter out of all recognition and recall. The consciousness of the hero, Chief Investigator Arkady Renko, is more diffuse and more far-reaching than that of the detectives who give voice to the hard-boiled philosophy Potter is thinking of. Through his roguish cop, Cruz Smith interrogates a whole national culture, allowing his inherently and complacently pro-Western bias to shift unexpectedly when the action moves to the West, to New York, where a splitting of consciousness takes place. After wrapping up the villain, Renko decides that he must return to the Soviet Union and his lover remain in the West (in whose image she has not too attractively remade herself). When William Hurt's Renko announces at the end of the film that he will always be a Russian, one is surprised mainly because the question had not seemed previously to come up. By deleting the New York sequence (or providing another neutral Scandinavian substitute, Stockholm), Potter has prevented the story from confronting its own attitudes towards East and West, and the film consequently seems more simple-mindedly anti-Soviet. One suspects finally that Potter has merely plumped for the wrong model. Renko, after all, is not a private eye but a cop; his attitudes towards and implication in the authoritarian state are more complex. By deleting not just New York but the sequence where Renko convalesces after a near-fatal attack by his erstwhile superior turned villain, Potter seems clearly to have misunderstood the psychology of the role. And in the psychology of the role rather than the sense of the plot lies the only meaning of the story. As it happens, there are cinematic as opposed to literary precedents for Arkady Renko: he is, one feels, closer kin to a tortured martyr of the system like Dirty Harry than a cynical outsider like Philip Marlowe.

## Inevitable violence

Pat Raine

The Honorary Consul  
Classic, Haymarket

A bungled kidnapping, on the frontier between Paraguay and Argentina, is at the centre of Graham Greene's novel *The Honorary Consul*, published in 1973 and now made into a film, with Michael Caine performing impressively in the title role, and Richard Gere contributing an allure entirely his own to the character of Doctor Plarr. As we might expect from a screen adaptation, there's a loss in irony and subtlety, and a gain in gloss. The effect produced by high-grade photography quite often runs counter to the quality of disappianation the novelist specifies. While the book is bleak, and even, occasionally brutal in feeling, the film (directed by John Mackenzie, with a screenplay by Christopher Hampton) doesn't eschew sentimentality, or its inverse, for that matter, incorporating acts of military and police aggression to underline the point about justifiable insurgency. However, give or take a character or two, and allowing for the necessary simplification involved in the epilogue, it keeps commendably close to the original plot. This, as Greene has said, reflects his abiding concern with the possibility of social change. The setting is Corrientes (the filming was a consequence of the Falklands crisis: was done in Mexico, in and around Veracruz), a town that contains three English inhabitants. If we include the half-Paraguayan Doctor Eduardo Plarr, it is Plarr's preoccupation with the fate of his father, an English liberal who allied him-

self with Fragnay's revolutionary forces, and disappeared, that gets the doctor, greatly against his inclinations, into a conspiracy to hold the American Ambassador to ransom for the release of thirty political prisoners. Things go wrong for the conspirators; instead of the important ambassador an unimportant British consul falls into their amateurish hands. ("On our side we are all amateurs", one of them defends himself. "The police and the soldiers are the professionals.") One of the things that interest the author is the interaction between Doctor Plarr, whose emotional responses are in a sense anaesthetized, and Charley Fortnum, amiably alcoholic and ineffectual, but capable none the less of simple generosity and goodness. Fortnum, the honorary consul, has rescued from the local brothel an Indian girl named Clara, and married her; her subsequent affair with Doctor Plarr adds complexity to the novel, and supplies the necessary romantic and erotic episodes for the scriptwriter. The acting of Euphelia Carrillo, who plays Clara, is adequate for the part, which isn't exacting. Like that of the majority of Graham Greene's female characters, Clara's behaviour is of less consequence, with regard to the plot, than the behaviour she evokes in others. Her foreignness and simplicity are made virtually impenetrable.

What goes to make a political agitator is another matter, and one that gets extensive consideration in the novel at least. Another of Greene's observations, that "violence is an inevitable consequence of the state of the world we live in", is borne out by the conditions postulated here. His primary revolutionary is an ex-prize (Joachim de Almeida in the film) -

## The periodicals, 10: History Today

Bruce Lenman

JULIET GARDINER (Editor)  
History Today  
Volume 33, December 1983, £1.

*History Today* differs fundamentally from the mass of other historical journals. They differ from one another in terms of subject or area coverage, or in reflecting the particular point of view of a given school of professional historians. In a subject where it is happily still possible for a professional in good standing with his fellows to publish hooks through major commercial publishers, the journals tend to be thought of as the home of rigorous technical scholarship. Students are urged to submit themselves to "the necessary discipline of the learned article". Were the subject to lose its ability to appeal to a broad general readership the learned journals would become the subject. The idea that this cannot possibly happen is tempting but illusory, for it tends to happen all the time in particular areas of history. The transition from the sort of economic history that R. H. Tawney wrote to the much more rigorous scholarship of the generation of, say, his successor in the University of London, F. J. Fisher, and then to the heavily mathematical world of the younger econometricians, has been a process marked by a heavy, though of course not an absolute, swing of emphasis from the book as the standard means of communication to the learned periodical.

*History Today* is committed to respecting no particular temporal or geographical limits, and it is absolutely committed to appealing to an audience beyond the restricted one of academic historians. A journal which is thus bent on upholding the role of history as part of the general culture of the contemporary educated and aware person necessarily faces dilemmas commensurate with the scope and worthiness of its aims. It is doomed to an endless war against shapelessness, for its potential field is infinite, and it is always in danger of being too obscure for the general reader or too superficial for the professional scholar. Presumably this problem as to the market aimed at is one of the explanations for the fairly disturbed recent editorial history of the journal. After the lengthy editorship of Peter Quennell it was edited by Michael Crowder, who

adopted a much more ambitious and better illustrated format. The magazine was then sold by its publisher, and now appears under the editorship of Michael Crowder's former colleague Juliet Gardiner.

Two obvious ways of shaping an issue are to select an appropriate anniversary, such as that of the American Revolution or the Reformation, and to ask for contributions from those who have written or are writing on the topic. The latest issue takes the alternative approach of nominating a theme - in this case that of Britain's largely vanished herring fishery. I must at once own to a personal interest in the subject, for my grandfather arrived in Aberdeen early in this century as a stowaway in the lifeboat of the Cooperative Society coalboat, with a view to seeking the work he could not find in his native East Anglia. The attraction to Aberdeen was because of its booming herring industry. It was always a vulnerable trade. J. L. Duthie, in a fascinating piece on the fishermen's religious revival of 1921 in north-east Scotland, shows it against a background of appalling economic dislocation and distress. Paul Thompson surveys the social realities of the fisher communities in Shetland, Lewis and Aberdeen. The independent-minded Shetlanders have been the survivors in an industry virtually destroyed by the closing of fishing grounds and the catastrophic European industrial over-fishing of what was left. It is not just industrial jobs which are vanishing in contemporary Britain. The collapse of our wood pulp industry and the slow strangulation of what is left of our fisheries are a reminder that extractive industries are collapsing too.

A piece on Isaac Walton by John Lowerson wittily reminds us that angling became an emotional escape for many from the realities of Victorian industry, and in the case of Mark Pattison from academic bloody-mindedness. There are articles on Luther, fiction in Stuart England, international economic cooperation after 1945, and on the modern literature of the Hellenistic World. Book reviews also feature prominently, as they should, but it is for its major pieces on "Living the Fishing" that this issue will be remembered and will deserve to be remembered, for they succeed in bringing out both the relevance and the potentially wide appeal of history when it is well written by authors with a real sense of the social reality behind political or economic events.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 156

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than February 3. A prize of £10 is offered for the correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling current set of answers opened on that date, or falling current set of answers opened on that date, or falling current set of answers opened on that date.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 156" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC4M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on February 10.

1. Regard the moon. It hangs above the level. Regard the moon. It lies beneath the moon.

2. Regard the moon. La lune me garde aucune rancune. She wrinkles a feeble eye. She smiles into corners. She smooths the hair of the grass. The moon has lost her memory.

3. I am aware of this moon; would he would change.

Competition No 153

No entries were submitted.

Answers:

1. A spiritually-minded person, with a fine sense of collar-bone and a pretty taste in champagne, then it is your understanding, and plenty of it.

2. Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, part 1, chapter 11.

3. I never saw so much champagne drunk so quickly. I found Richard and brought him in and a drink from large quantities of a dangerous mixture by which which consisted chiefly of champagne, gin and

absinthe.

Evelyn Waugh, diary, October 25, 1925.

3. And the small ripples split upon the beach.

Scarcely o'erpressed the cream of your champagne.

When o'er the bill the sparkling bumpers flash.

That spring-dawn of the world; the heart's first

Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, canto 2, stanza 19.

## Breaking up the unhappy home

Peter Laslett

BRIGITTE BERGER and PETER L. BERGER  
The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground  
252pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.  
009 1532108

There is indeed a war over the family. In the consciousness-raising meetings of the feminists, in the print-out-littered offices of the welfare ministries and the census bureaux, at the constant international gatherings of the academics, its strategies are planned and its battles engaged. At party conferences also, and even in the Cabinet offices themselves, the talk is frequently of drooping birth-rates, one-parent families, the burden of the elderly, with its menacing prospects for the future, and incessantly of the decline in familial values. No subject is more easily entered into, on none is it easier to hold and express an opinion, and on none is there more ignorance, prejudice and misinformation.

On no subject, therefore, is it more difficult to write a clear, enlightening and persuasive book. If you can bring yourself to read this essay by two senior American sociologists you will find something of such a character in it, a useful and thoughtful guide to the horrendous array of up-to-the-minute "literature" on the family. Although it seems to me to be studded with naïvetés and with misapprehensions, and finally inadequate to its portentous theme, the obvious obstacles are for the most part of a literary character. The English reader is to be warned that he enters a cavern of limp expressions, as far removed from the abrupt phraseology of the American sports writer as it is from the language actually used in the family, in any family, anywhere, at any time.

But the English reader has another hurdle to get over. He will find himself at the outset brusquely consigned to the ranks of those who follow where imperial America leads. "The United States", we are told, continues to be the hegemonic culture in the contemporary world. The "problems" thought up by Ivy League intellectuals, New York media-types and Washington politicians today in the area of culture and worrying people in London and Stockholm a short time afterwards, people in Budapest about the same time though in necessarily more subterranean fashion, and the modernised "with-it" crowd in Bombay or Jakarta not long thereafter. Such are the exigencies of being the "lead" society in the great drama of modernisation.

If we really are the case that the issues here discussed were as trivial in their origins as this passage implies, then we could convince ourselves that the fevered discussion of the crisis in the family was wholly, and not simply partially, a matter of political improvisation, of literary fashion, and of journalistic hype. But it is to be feared that we have deeper causes for concern, and that they extend even further than the consistently erroneous doctrines which American sociologists have adopted as to the family and its history in Europe, especially as to "modernisation". Although the authors of this book conscientiously strive to apprehend advances made on the topic in the Old World, they misunderstand and misapply the findings. They get themselves into the position of arguing, for example, that something which they insist on calling the bourgeois family was foisted upon a reluctant social structure in early modern Europe, and yet contended, and still contends, values and practices which in the 1980s all of us would do well to retain and to reinforce. Let us turn to what it is that the war over the family is about, and look at it in European terms, our terms.

The arguments have been much rehearsed, and we need to do no more than summarize. In the first place, and by the libertarians, especially the champions of women, the family has been condemned as the oldest, strongest weapon of oppression. It oppresses the underclass because in its bourgeois form it is the instrument of property-ownership and of the solidarity of property-owners with one another. It oppresses children because it treats them as non-persons, owned by their parents, and it oppresses women by denying them individuality and full citizenship. Familial oppression proceeds by force, or, of course, by the immense power stored up over the millennia in the patriarchal, phallogocentric social system. It

justifies itself by the dogmatic assertion that the family is a natural institution, biologically and socially natural, over which there is no choice. The family enforces monogamy, forbids control of births, especially by abortion, outlaws homosexuality and exorates the homosexual. Every move towards individualism and freedom has to begin by an attack on familial authority. Every move in a conservative direction has to insist correspondingly on a return to familial values, on the self-evident truth that the nuclear family is the building block of society, so that to weaken it is to menace everyone's security; and to abolish it is to take away our humanity.

Especially in so laconic a form these may seem overheated arguments. But here are some of the reasons why Plato and all really radical Utopians, especially Marxian revolutionaries in the early days of revolutionary success, proclaim that the family should be abolished. These are the grounds on which R. D. Laing and others have called for the death of the family and why Shulamith Firestone asserts that "sexism represents the oldest, most rigid class caste system in existence", or Yoko Ono that "woman is the nigger of the world". It is one of the interesting features of the present war over the family that leaders on the radical side are quite frank in condemning the Marxist tradition for its blindness to every element in familial oppressiveness except its connection with property. This is admirably brought out in the best of the radical books on the subject, Mark Poster's *Critical Theory of the Family*, published in 1978 and perhaps the most interesting of all the recent works. But we have yet to refer to two other sets of ideological combatants at present active on the field.

One of these warrior bands, so our authors inform us with complacency, is that palladium of all sociological speculation, a *New Class*. A "knowledge class" they call it, of experts, educators, technicians, intellectuals, whose rising social power is on the way towards control of the Soviet Union and of the other so-called socialist societies as well as of a great deal of Western society too. They are backed up in this belief by a range of American social scientists, such as Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset and Alvin W. Gouldner. It does not appear to worry this intellectual choir that the theory of social change brought about by the rise to victorious control of new classes is no longer held to be a self-evident truth by historians.

However that may be, the New Class is up in arms about the family because it does its job of social reproduction so badly. Experts will have to take over from father and from mother. Proposals have been made in the US anyway, though Donzelot talks in a similar way about France, "for mandatory day-care of all welfare recipients, the licensing of all new parents, required parental education in public high schools". 1984 does indeed seem to be close. In the People's Republic of China, with the campaign to enforce the one-child family, it is surely already here.

The last set of combatants whom we can mention are the demographers, campaigning not so much in their own persons as staff officers of politicians and propagandists, in or out of office. There are many conflicting voices and opinions in this part of the European battle-field, but the cry for more marriages and more births is now to be heard from nearly all countries. In France and in Germany it is rising to a crescendo, almost to a shriek. For in practically every society on our continent - Ireland and Greece are still not among them - the native replacement rate is now negative.

Already the oldest societies which have ever existed, it seems inevitable that the continued short-fall of births will make them older still, and that within a decade or two in some of them population stagnation will be succeeded by population decline. "La Refus de la vie" is what the most voliferous of the French spokesmen call it. By this is meant the demonstrably growing practice of cohabitation without marriage and without children, and with persons of either sex; ever-increasing divorce, now half or more as common in Britain as marriage itself; the extraordinarily frequency of abortion and the supposedly almost universal indifference to familial values and imperatives. When it is remembered how passionately European people have always felt about the size and the age of

their populations in the past, especially the French, this tremendous outcry is just what we should expect. We should also expect it to appear in blank, black-and-white, moralistic terms.

There is much to say in response to the book of familial lamentations all the same. The historical sociologist is disposed to smile a little wryly at the supposition that the family is a contrivance of a kind which could disappear, or be abolished, or effectively remoulded by social engineering. If the alleged new class really thinks like this, or any disaffected members of it, then the Utopian unrealism of Plato and Engels blinds to reality as much as ever it did. To suppose, as conservatives seem or need to do, that there ever was a world we have lost in which Christian progressive doctrine was universally obeyed, in any European country in any century, is simply a mistake. It is an illusion brought about by reading the pronouncements of ideologists of the past as if they were objective analysis. Almost every one of the symptoms which are found so frightening has existed before, and become more or less prevalent from time to time.

So also has the tendency to read the most discouraging interpretation of what is known of contemporary fact as the inescapable tendency of the future. No one knows for example if the "moral" are in a majority in the US or in Britain. But one only has to consider what happened to Cecil Parkinson to recognize that practical politicians have to conduct themselves as if it were so. Living in the approved man-wife-child group is less appropriate than it has ever been before, for demographic and other reasons. But it is also true that those who do have the opportunity welcome it, for the most part find this way of life eminently satisfactory and will defend the habits and attitudes which go with it. To all this has to be added the fact that for all their sophistication demographic projections are never entirely reliable. The subject being specialist, nearly everyone can be misled by its carefully qualified pronouncements.

Nevertheless, there are several features of our present condition in Europe which are quite without past precedent and which are peculiarly calculated to exacerbate the war over the family. One is the case for supposing that in high industrial societies like our own it is almost certainly the exit of the mother or potential mother from the home to take her rightful place in employment which will ensure that replacement rates will never rise much above unity again, and are not unlikely to become negative and remain so. In fact, high industrial economies seem to be organizing themselves in such a way that two incomes are entirely necessary in order to support the prevalent standard of living, at all social levels. They are also settling down, apparently, to a situation where high unemployment, entirely uncondemned to procreative familial life, is an inbuilt institution.

There are further novelties in our condition which can, and seemingly must, arouse even uglier passions. At a recent meeting on age and employment in Western Europe, a delegate from Hungary questioned whether the agonizing over senescence and prospective population decline was not to some extent the newest form of class antagonism and racism amongst Western peoples. To appreciate the second

suggestion, it is only necessary to recognize that France would have declined in numbers, become even older, in the inter-war years, if it had not been for the immigration and naturalization of millions of foreigners - European foreigners.

If France could now bring itself to accept the North Africans who have flooded into the red belt round its capital, and who are now so fiercely resented by the Front National, and to take more people like them, its "population problem" could perhaps be settled again. Britain, we may notice, might well have suffered decline in population, and an even greater ageing, if it had not been for the West Indian, the Pakistani and the Indian immigrants.

We know very well that we are in no position to reproach France for racism in our common situation, or for the recrudescence of fascism which this situation has helped to provoke. Germany, worst placed demographically of all the European nations, could no doubt go far to solve its "problem" by selective immigration. But - and here is the crucial difference from the past - this could not be of immigrants of European stock. It would have to be *Gdstarbeiter* and those who would follow them, Turkish and other Near-Easterners and North Africans. No one is unxious to meddle with racist feelings and racist politics in that part of Europe.

Because they do not see things from the European angle, Berger and Berger do not address themselves to these ever more numerous implications of the fact that there is a war over the family. They do pick their way through the issues of abortion, of the feminist protest - which is surely the noblest and weightiest issue of them all - of the irreplacability of "traditional" (misused by them "bourgeois") familial relationships and values for the adequate development of personality, and lesser preoccupations like democracy and the family, and the possibility of decadence. There is an earnest superficiality about some of the discussion and a historical shallowness which make the reader disposed to decide that the theme is too demanding for them. It may be so for anybody, writing now, at the time at which it is just beginning to dawn on the inhabitants of the high industrial parts of the world that they are living in a social structure which is inappropriate to their condition, their demographic condition, and above all to their entirely unprecedented distribution by age.

Europe will never be young again; it is very unlikely to gain in population again; its familial system will never again be represented at all properly by the group of father, mother and young children. We have simply ceased to live in these respects as all previous societies have lived. As Europe is today, so the United States and Japan will be tomorrow, and so finally in the later part of the next century will be the people of Africa and Asia.

This is not the opportunity to attempt to recount the reasons why all this is so, or to enter into the details of the lag between what we feel we ought to be and what in fact we manifestly are, in social structural terms. Let us simply agree that one way of looking at *The War Over the Family* is to lose all sense of surprise that such a war should exist and be so pitiless a fact of our time, so unlikely to be solved in a satisfactory way.

## Rural reports

John Cherrington

CLIFFORD MORSELEY  
News from the English Countryside 1851-1950  
288pp. Harrap. £10.95.  
0245 540083

This is an interesting and entertaining book, but it could have been much better. The idea is a good one - to collect the rural history of the century between 1850 and 1950 as told in the pages of provincial newspapers. So we are given accounts of wife-selling, public executions, the exorcism of a witch's influence by burning a pig's heart up the chimney, the formation of the first farm labourers Union, a

hiring fair. Sleeping and living in one's coffin seems to have been quite popular in the period - although I myself know of at least two cases in quite recent years where wealthy eccentrics enjoyed their coffins; one used to make his estate staff carry him in it to the church every Saturday morning.

But for a book dealing with the countryside of the period *News from the English Countryside* lacks an understanding of the fundamental changes in the rural economy which followed the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. There are, it is true, accounts of the depressingly low level of wages and the hardships of the lower-paid or even those not paid at all. But the causes of much of this misery - the result of the opening of the British market to unrestricted imports - are not discussed.



## Relatively speaking

Thomas Baldwin

GEORGE D. ROMANOS  
Quine and Analytic Philosophy  
227pp. MIT Press. £15.30.  
0262 10110X

Willard van Orman Quine is one of this century's most interesting and influential philosophers; so it is not surprising that, at a time when American philosophers are becoming introspective about their methods and goals, an attempt should be made to situate Quine in the context of the dominant trends of Anglo-American analytic philosophy of this century. George Romanos's main contention in his book is that Quine has subverted, from within, the whole analytic tradition: this tradition, he claims, is committed to an "absolutist" conception of language which Quine has shown to be untenable. It is clear that to examine this contention, we have to reflect on the nature of analytic philosophy and the conclusions which Quine is thought to have established.

Michael Dummett proposed some years ago that what is central to analytic philosophy is the thesis that the philosophy of thought is to be accomplished by the philosophy of language, in the sense that it is through the philosophy of language that we can elucidate how our thoughts relate to the world. Although there is some infelicity in thinking of the early philosophy of Moore and Russell in these terms, it seems to me the best brief characterization of analytic philosophy that we have at present. Dummett of course made his proposal in the course of his reflections on Frege's role as initiator of analytic philosophy, and it is a severe defect of Professor Romanos's book that he mentions Frege only in passing. Still, what we have to see is whether, by assigning a role of this importance to the philosophy of language, analytic philosophy is required to conceive of language in the "absolutist" way which Romanos alleges, Quine has undermined.

This "absolutist" conception of language seems to rest on a supposed contrast between language and everything else: the thought is that whereas the possession of properties by non-linguistic things is somehow relative to the language in which these properties are expressed, the possession of semantic properties by elements of language is not relative to a meta-

language in which these properties are expressed. So the suggestion is that if the absolute conception of language were right, semantic inquiries would yield conclusions which were not relative to the inquirer's own conceptual scheme, in a way which is not possible for non-semantic inquiries: the philosophy of language would be free from a relativism that infects all other inquiries.

Exciting though such a prospect might appear, it is manifest that its appeal is illusory: there is nothing in semantic inquiries to set them apart from non-semantic inquiries in this way. But what is mystifying is that Romanos should take it that analytic philosophy is committed to holding that non-semantic inquiries are infected with this kind of relativism in a way in which semantic inquiries are not. He alludes to Carnap's famous distinction between internal and external questions, according to which we have to distinguish between the sense of existential questions as they arise within a theory, and their sense outside any theory; but semantic questions (eg. are there propositions?) admit of both of Carnap's interpretations, so there is no move from Carnap's internal/external distinction (whatever one thinks of it) to the relative/absolute distinction that Romanos wants to foist on analytic philosophy. At one point Romanos seeks to derive a commitment to the absolute conception of language from the thesis, which he imputes to the analytic tradition, that word meaning is prior to sentence meaning. But, whatever one thinks about the supposed connection here, the thesis that sentence meaning is prior to word meaning is certainly not, as Romanos asserts, a discovery made by Wittgenstein in his later writings and only properly developed by Quine; it is prominent in Frege's work, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, and Russell's theory of logical fictions (Quine himself has never made any claims to originality in this matter; he traces the point back to Bentham.) In the light of this misapprehension, not unconnected with Romanos's neglect of Frege, it is not surprising that Romanos's characterization of analytic philosophy is fundamentally mistaken.

So far I have said nothing about Quine. For there is no merit in Romanos's appeals to his authority if Romanos is only tilting at windmills. Nonetheless, the question can be asked, independent of Romanos, as to whether Quine has subverted analytic philosophy from within

(Richard Rorty says as much in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*). This is, on the face of it, a surprising claim: for Quine is famous for his identification of a particular linguistic structure – first order predicate logic – as a canonical notation which provides the "ultimate categories, a limning of the most general traits of reality" and claims such as this are the bread and butter of analytic philosophy. Wherein, then, lies the supposed conflict with analytic philosophy? One view is that Quine's rejection of analyticity subverts analytic philosophy; but once the philosophy of language is not treated as conceptual analysis, there is no reason why this should be so. Instead we have to look to the doctrines first enunciated in *Word and Object*, and much developed thereafter, of the "indeterminacy of translation" and "inscrutability of reference", to identify the supposed conflict. For it is felt that these doctrines undermine the significance of semantic inquiries, in that if they are accepted semantics cannot provide an account of the way things are said to be: there is no such one way things are said to be, and between the variety of possible ways, which may invoke quite different ontological categories, we have no way of choosing.

There is no space here to discuss those doctrines properly. Romanos shows himself to be familiar with them, but not with the issues they raise; for example, Quine writes always of "translation", but semantics proper concerns interpretation and when Quine's doctrines are considered in this light, their plausibility is diminished (eg. Gareth Evans argued persuasively that Quine's "Gavagai" example evaporates when considered in this way). However, it is not clear to me how Quine's doctrines, even supposing them to be correct (and I do think that they are correct for abstract objects), undermine analytic philosophy. For, if interpretation is indeterminate, and reference inscrutable, then surely our thoughts are likewise indeterminate and inscrutably directed; furthermore, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the world itself is similarly indeterminate – for if we cannot frame determinate thoughts about the world, what sense can we give to the thought that the world itself is determinate? Romanos himself accepts this conclusion; but in doing so he reveals himself to be an analytic philosopher, in that his general conception of reality has been formed by his philosophy of language.

## Suitably binding

J. O. Urmson

JOHN COLMAN  
John Locke's Moral Philosophy  
282pp. Edinburgh University Press. £20.  
0852344452

Everyone who takes an honourable degree in philosophy in a British university will certainly have some knowledge of Locke's epistemology and probably some knowledge of his political philosophy; very few will know anything about his moral philosophy, except, perhaps, for his surprising claim that a demonstrative science of morals is possible. Yet there is reason to believe that the *Essay* was written at least partly in order to determine the possibility and extent of moral knowledge; in it Locke concludes that a science of nature is impossible and that we should rather devote ourselves to matters more within our capacities. So, Locketella us, "*Morality is the proper Science, and Business of Mankind in general.*" In this book John Colman gives us a critical account of how Locke himself conducted this business.

Locke, Colman tells us, held that the laws of morality were founded on the will of God; they are the laws of a divine sovereign and are binding for that reason. We have no innate knowledge of these laws, but we can come to understand what they are and why they are from a consideration of the goodness of God and the nature and condition of man. The laws are made by God to suit human nature and the human condition, and we can come to see how these laws are made for the well-being of man. Man's final motive for action is always a desire for his own happiness; he will, if he is wise, obey the law of God because, if not in this world then in the next, God will punish him if he does not. Thus God ensures the coincidence of one's own and the general welfare. A complication arises from the fact that Locke held that moral ideas were the creation of the human understanding; thus there is no distinction in nature between murder and manslaughter; we make the distinction and there is no way in which it must be made to be made correctly. Thus Locke has to show how laws made by God can be expressed in terms created by man, and not provided ready-made by God.

Colman attempts to show, with a good deal of success, that Locke succeeds in developing a consistent moral philosophy on this basis; it is incomplete in that the deductive science which Locke declined to be possible is never constructed, but the apparently disparate elements are welded into a consistent theory. Colman is critical of this theory, with good cause, but he thinks it intellectually respectable and well worth examination.

One notable feature of this book is that it presents Locke as a natural law theorist, though, it has to be admitted, a deviantist from the classical model. To do this Colman has to rely heavily on the unpublished *Tracts on Government and Essays on the Law of Nature*. This is a bold contention, for much of what Locke has to say sounds not unlike a refutation of it. He declared war on fictions as the root of all evil. But this later led, in ways which anticipate and even improve on Russell, to an enrichment of empiricist semantics, through a verificationist contextual analysis of what were now regarded as useful fictions. Only terms which failed the verificationist test were still declared. This, according to Harrison, was the reason for Bentham's continued hostility to the notion of natural law.

Verificationist semantics, however, makes the explanation of all moral terms impossible. Several conflicting texts notwithstanding, Harrison rejects the view that Bentham was an emotivist. Paradoxically, Bentham's rejection of natural law seems based on moral naturalism. Though at the last Harrison wishes to save Bentham from the inconsistency of espousing both naturalism and the separation of "is" and "ought", I failed to find the escape route offered.

Packed with argument and attractively written, this book richly illustrates Bentham's numerous interests, while lending unity to his central ideas. Bentham's continuing interest is not in his somewhat unsystematic and derivative philosophical system, but in some of his specific theories, eg. on action, punishment and law. Harrison does not dwell on these; but he has done more than anyone to elucidate, sympathetically but critically, the philosophical core of Bentham's work.

## On the technical side

Peter Vergo

CHRISTINA LODDER  
Russian Constructivism  
328pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £30.  
030027273  
JOHN MILNER  
Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde  
252pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £20.  
030027710

Early twentieth-century Russian art has enjoyed something of a bonanza lately. Commercial publishers, Thames and Hudson and Yale University Press prominent among them, have raised bringing out a string of highly specialised titles, including among them monographs on Tatlin and Malevich, on Constructivism and on Russian stage design which would have been scarcely imaginable ten years ago. The Royal Academy's exhibition *Art of the Avant-Garde in Russia* was well attended, though it showed only the poor remains of the once magnificent Costakis collection. Yet it seems likely that many visitors, tramping through the private rooms at Burlington House, still find Russian avant-garde art movements, especially Constructivism, aesthetically alien and conceptually baffling, hedged about by political clichés and intellectual posturing, tied to an ideology not only unfashionable but convoluted and rebarbative.

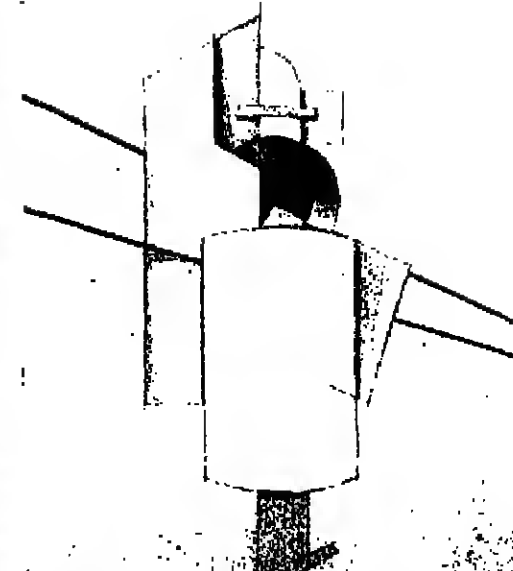
Constructivism has never been well served by its apologists. Too much of the writing produced by its propagandists and interpreters is mainly, obscurantist or jargon-ridden. In this respect, Christina Lodder's new study does little to improve the situation, though, to be fair, it is valuable to have a reliable history of the movement, based on archival research and liberally illustrated with accessible documents. There are also useful biographies of both major and minor artists of the period; where else would one turn to find out about Vladimir Fedorovich Khrushchev, for example? But a leaden prose style, plus a tendency to think in strings of

abstract concepts, detracts from the undoubtedly interesting of much of the material, especially some of the photographs and documents published here for the first time. On occasion, the author seems to be writing in a secret language to which she has neglected to provide the key. Acute indeed the reader who realizes at first exposure that "juxtaposed to" means, in Dr Lodder's mind at least, the same as "contrasted with". Or consider the following: "Gabo first used transparent celluloid in his *Construction in Relief* of 1920 which also seems to have been among the first three-dimensional works in which Gabo explored a Euclidean geometric form. By 1920 Gabo had thus clarified his formal vocabulary and found the transparent material which minimized the textually associative and material interests of his constructions . . .". What is wrong with "he"?

*Russian Constructivism* has all the drawbacks of the painstaking PhD thesis: bottom-heavy with footnotes and apparatus, myopically detailed, lacking in wider perspectives. Lodder must presumably know about other art movements besides Constructivism, but that knowledge is not brought into play. We need to be given a far more comprehensive account of both Parisian Cubism and Italian Futurism if we are to understand, for example, the early work of Popova and Ekster. In fact, Ekster's early development is not really treated at all, perhaps because Lodder regards her work as different from that of the other Constructivists who showed at the "5x5=25" exhibition in 1921; but what that difference consists in is not made clear. No comparisons are drawn between the organizational principles and aims of the Higher Art Technical Studios (Vkhutemas) and the German Bauhaus, save for the cautious observation that these institutions played a "not dissimilar" role in the development of modern design, and that the personal links between them were "not insignificant". Discussing the complex question of possible antecedents of Tatlin's "Monument to the Third International", Lodder dutifully rehearses the for the most part implausible sources other scholars have identified – Bruegel's "Tower of Babel", Rodin's "Monu-

ment to Labour", Baku oil derricks, the skeleton masts used on pre-1914 battleships – without acknowledging which, if any, of these hypotheses she prefers, or offering any new observations of her own. (Curiously, neither Lodder nor John Milner points to the only immediate precedent for a monument based on an inclined spiral, namely Obrist's "Sketch for a Monument" of 1898–1900.) It is above all this lack of judgment that causes one to give *Russian Constructivism*, for all its obvious merits as a source book on Constructivism, such a grudging welcome.

The contrast with *Vladimir Tatlin and the Russian Avant-Garde* could scarcely be greater. Milner's book, too, is based on extensive archival research; yet he wears his learning lightly. His style is elegant, concise and above all readable. Dealing with a subject still unfamiliar to many, he has the ability to suggest, evoke and elicit his readers' attention. Comparisons with other periods, other movements and forms of art come naturally, always illuminating, always making a point: "Both Larionov and Tatlin were closely identified with the South of Russia . . . further from the capital than were ever Cézanne and Van Gogh working in the Midi or Gauguin in Brittany. The Ukraine, the Crimea and Georgia were areas with distinct local traditions, closer to Constantinople than St Petersburg." Discussing Khrushchev's poem "Incantation by Laughter", Milner's powers of description are acute: "Khrushchev's poem by its repetitive yet evolving sound based upon a single root abandons the restraints of sense. . . . Its repetitive transformations emphasize inexorably the sound of the root word so that this takes precedence over its meaning. . . . Sound then supercedes sense and 'Incantation by Laughter' begins to sound like laughter, by virtue of its physical structure, its noise." Interestingly, what Khrushchev was doing in practice had already been formulated (though not published) in theory by his contemporary and fellow-artist, Kandinsky: "Manifold repetition of a word . . . makes it lose its external sense as a name. In this way, even the sense of the word as an abstract indication of the object is forgotten;



"Study for a Counter-Relief", 1914, by Vladimir Tatlin; reproduced from *The Modern Drawing: 100 Works on Paper from The Museum of Modern Art by John Elderfield* (213pp. Thames and Hudson, £25. 0500233829).

and only the pure sound of the word remains . . .". In the end, Milner's monograph is particularly valuable and interesting precisely because the range of references is so wide, reflecting the author's own interests. Not just poetry but astronomy and alchemy and contemporary mystical literature are brought into his discussion of Tatlin's "Monument", enabling him to suggest the richness and complexity of the many possible layers of interpretation in a way that Lodder's enumeration of non-sources does not. Only very occasionally do Milner's powers of description serve us ill; the very first plate, for S. Sergei's "On the Sailing Ship", is certainly not seen "from the vertiginous viewpoint of the masthead"; rather, we are looking up at the masthead past a figure clinging precariously to a spar. But this is a fine book: an important piece of cultural history and at the same time a significant contribution to twentieth-century art studies.

## Dutifully self-interested

Joseph Raz

ROSS HARRISON  
Bentham  
286pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.  
0710095260

Born in the same year as Mozart, Bentham survived Beethoven. His relatively uneventful life mirrors the birth of the complex attitudes of progressive democratic politics out of the wit and elegant clarities of eighteenth-century Classicism. A child of the Enlightenment, he helped its displacement by that political radicalism, based on a deeper understanding of society, which it nourished. Though Ross Harrison is a philosophical study and not an intellectual biography, he succeeds in evoking the spirit of the man in the context of his times.

Bentham's early faith in reform emanating from the Crown of Europe was whittled away by the bitter experience of his long and painful efforts to get official approval for his penal reforms. Typically, his conversion to universal suffrage did not lead him to abandon his earlier assumptions, but was explained by them: "The twin foundations of his philosophy, the moral principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number and the psychological doctrine that human motivation is essentially self-interested, led him early to the belief that the coincidence of interest and duty is the only certain route to moral improvement. If his belief was now turned on the rules themselves, argument advocating conditions in which interest and duty coincide, was reinforced by advocacy of constitutional reforms that would

make it possible to dispense with reliance on the rulers' enlightened good-will. Universal suffrage (properly qualified) would bring the coincidence of duty and interest into the political process itself.

All this is in tune with the new economics. Like Adam Smith, Bentham saw that the market cannot assure the provision of public goods. Temperamentally he was sympathetic to bureaucratic regulation. His meticulous attention to insignificant detail is notorious. This is not merely a personal quirk, but a caricature of the Enlightenment conception of human nature on which Bentham based his post-Enlightenment political ideas. The giant shadow of Newtonian physics loomed much and encouraged a simplistic view of the mind and of society. Empiricist philosophy understood the mind in terms of interacting sensations, perceptions, desires and their traces. Benthamite Utilitarianism is a humanistic espousal of the well-being of all interpreted in terms of this atomistic psychology.

Later in life Bentham developed a sensitive explanation of the way interest affects belief, an explanation which exposes a dilemma he never resolved. The very need for an explanation assumes that belief in moral propositions can affect action in ways in which this insistence on the separation between "is" and "ought" and on the inertness of the intellect could not explain. This explanation shows Bentham's strengths, as well as his weaknesses, his unrivalled ingenuity and fearless pursuit of the logical consequences of a few simple ideas, as well as his inability to transcend the assumptions he inherited from Locke, Hume, Helvétius and Beccaria.

Another unresolved conflict is also hidden here. To Bentham the utilitarian influence of interest on judgment sanctions the use of propaganda in the service of reform. But Bentham the child of the *Aufklärung* was entirely driven to barbed, sardonic indignation at any abuse of power. He declared war on fictions as the root of all evil. But this later led, in ways which anticipate and even improve on Russell, to an enrichment of empiricist semantics, through a verificationist contextual analysis of what were now regarded as useful fictions. Only terms which failed the verificationist test were still declared. This, according to Harrison, was the reason for Bentham's continued hostility to the notion of natural law.

Verificationist semantics, however, makes the explanation of all moral terms impossible. Several conflicting texts notwithstanding, Harrison rejects the view that Bentham was an emotivist. Paradoxically, Bentham's rejection of natural law seems based on moral naturalism. Though at the last Harrison wishes to save Bentham from the inconsistency of espousing both naturalism and the separation of "is" and "ought", I failed to find the escape route offered.

Packed with argument and attractively written, this book richly illustrates Bentham's numerous interests, while lending unity to his central ideas. Bentham's continuing interest is not in his somewhat unsystematic and derivative philosophical system, but in some of his specific theories, eg. on action, punishment and law. Harrison does not dwell on these; but he has done more than anyone to elucidate, sympathetically but critically, the philosophical core of Bentham's work.

## Reasoning into practice

Sherban Cantacuzino

LESLIE MARTIN  
Buildings and Ideas 1933–83 from the Studio of Leslie Martin and his associates  
230pp. Cambridge University Press. £45.  
0521231078

This book is an important contribution to architectural thought and essential reading for all those concerned with the creative process of designing buildings. It also celebrates Sir Leslie Martin's fifty years as a practising architect, teacher and thinker.

His achievements have been wide-ranging. The son of an architect, brought up at the tail end of the Arts and Crafts Movement, he overthrew the ideas of the Modern Movement, becoming Head of the School of Architecture at Hull at the unusually early age of twenty-six. As Deputy Architect and later Architect to the London County Council he led the design team for the Festival Hall and Crystal Palace Sports Centre. In 1956 he was appointed the first Professor of Architecture at Cambridge and, subsequently, as an architect in private practice, he has been responsible, among many other things, for both university development plans and buildings at Leicester, Hull, Oxford and Cambridge. Before the war he was joint editor (with Naum Gabo and Ben Nicholson) of *Circles*, an anthology which was published in the title of 1971, and at Cambridge he founded the Centre for Land Use and Hull Form Studies (later the Martin Centre) to investigate the range of building form available to architects and the new choices that they are opening up in the pattern of living and the pattern of ideas. Throughout his life, Sir Leslie has worked closely with younger colleagues, and his acknowledgment in the title of the book that the buildings and ideas emanate from a group of associates, many of whom, like Colin St John Wilson, Lionel March and Tyrone Durrant (the moving spirit behind *Build-*

ings and Ideas and the author of its foreword), are now distinguished in their own right.

Although its large, horizontal format puts the book into the same category as Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète*, it is not just another chronological account of an architect's buildings. It sets out instead to show how the author and a particular group around him "have thought about, composed and constructed buildings, and have tried to create out of all the disparate and conditioning elements, some sense of harmony and formal order". It emphasizes the continuity of architectural ideas and the developing process of design based on rational analysis, measurement, technical innovations and speculative thought. It is in two parts, the first part dealing with buildings by type, the second looking at buildings in their urban context. An appendix illustrates (perhaps too briefly) the private and public work up to 1956 and includes a number of writings, among them a previously unpublished but fascinating essay on a sketch by Leonardo. The book also includes previously unpublished work such as the house for Lord Walston at Cambridge and the two beautiful conversions of old buildings (amply illustrated) which Martin did himself at Shalford. As might be expected in a book which treats architecture thematically, all the illustrations are black-and-white and generous use is made of drawings and photographs of models. As a contribution to theory *Buildings and Ideas* (1933–83) stands closer to Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* or Palladio's *Quattro Libri dell' Architettura* than to the collected works of modern architects. Martin's rational approach to design recalls Alberti's statement that the arts are learnt by reason and method, and that they are mastered by practice. The continuous process of design in development within a type-form is comparable to Palladio's strict variations on the villa theme, or to his elaboration of the antique orders in his designs for palaces.

In Part One the author presents a number of individual buildings for different types of use – from generic plans to designs for specific university residences, libraries, auditoria and lecture-rooms. The designs for the university residences demonstrate the continuing validity of the court and the opportunities for development within the range of this basic type-form. Elsewhere in the book Martin argues that the court has its exact opposite in the island building surrounded by free space from which it receives its daylight. Both housing and urban university sites tend to exemplify this type of building development because it is easier to satisfy the needs of separate clients on a plot-by-plot basis. Yet it is the island building which leads to high-rise through greater intensification of land use; and in an extract from an earlier paper Martin shows how the court form pieces the same amount of floor-space into buildings which are exactly one third the total height of those in island form. Time and again he stresses the importance of knowing how a particular built form uses the available land. "The concept of a spectrum of forms," he writes with passion, "which puts the same floor space on the same site, starting with a tower and then, with a continuously changing envelope, gradually transforming itself into a court, is a beautiful way of thinking about the range of forms that is possible on a site."

In Part Two he deals with the problem of good fit, recognizing the need in the city for both anonymity and ceremony. The extensions to Kettle's Yard at Cambridge more than treble the volume of the existing house yet, treated discreetly as an infilling behind a wall, they leave the familiar pre-eminence of church and house seen across a green unimpaired, while providing the public with a fine new art gallery. At the other end of the scale, Martin, recalling "some of the forgotten symbols of a city: its entry points or gates, its ceremonial ways or public squares . . ." illustrates a number of projects, including the first British 11th-

rary scheme in Bloomsbury (rejected, to London's inestimable loss), with its new public square giving the British Museum portico and Hawksmoor's church a splendid new setting. It is at this level of symbolism and its design implications that one begins to question some of Martin's arguments. If symbols are a way of communicating meaning, a powerful unifying form like the court may suppress such meaning. If elements like the chapel, the hall, the entrances both to the court itself and to the staircases and room clusters within the court are not adequately expressed. The three-storey high portico of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, penetrated by a grand flight of steps leading to a *piano nobile* entrance, successfully communicates its message because monumental piers and porticos are associated with entrances to buildings of civic importance. The same plan in front of the nearly symmetrical West Road elevation of Harvey Court at Cambridge, an elevation of staircases, access corridors and utility rooms which forms the back of the building, do not. Thus Martin's negative statement in *Circles* that "designing a building was no longer a question of imposing an applied form" is more acceptable than its positive corollary that "in every problem . . . the appropriate form could be discovered in the problem itself". This is not to argue for the merely superficial decorative allusion, but for a certain kind of serious manipulation of "the appropriate form" which may not otherwise produce an acceptable external appearance. It is to argue for what Herbert Read, also writing in *Circles*, called "the translation of [certain] concepts into objects of aesthetic contemplation". What comes to mind, though without the use of the classical language of architecture, is Palladio's search for the correct expression on his church fronts of the plan and section – a search which culminated in a solution so beautiful and profound that it continued to inspire architects for 250 years.



# Ascetic without heresy

R. A. Markus

CLARE STANCLIFFE  
St Martin and his Hagiography: History and  
miracle in Sulpicius Severus  
396pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.  
0192418958

On any reckoning St Martin was one of the most influential saints in medieval Western Europe. The Frankish kings of the Merovingian dynasty made him the patron saint of France, and his friend and hagiographer, Sulpicius Severus, created from him the model for countless later saints. Doubtless, saints can exert their influence directly in heaven; on earth they are dependent on their hagiographers. St Martin would be a very shadowy figure but for the work of Sulpicius. Later stories for the most part either derive from it or arc of little value in documenting his activities. Apart from some valuable information preserved by Gregory, Martin's successor in the see of Tours some two hundred years later, mainly concerning the churches and the beginnings of a parochial organization established by Martin in his diocese, and a few other scraps, Sulpicius' *Life of St Martin*, his *Dialogues* and the reports in his *Chronicle* constitute the sum total of our sources for Martin's life and work. In the best traditions of hagiographical scholarship, Clare Stancliffe has devoted the greater part of her account of St Martin to a critical examination of Sulpicius' Martinian writings.

The carefully ordered logic of Dr Stancliffe's inquiry is set out in the sequence of objectives stated in her introduction. The chapters devoted to Sulpicius are, however, not only the necessary preliminaries of the quest for the historical Martin: they have an interest of their own. In the first place, the *Life* is a landmark in the development of hagiography. This literary genre was in its infancy when Sulpicius wrote this work, after his first meeting with Martin in 393-4 and some time before Martin's death in 397. The wide diffusion of the book and of Martin's cult helped to set the mould for much of the subsequent mass of literature in this genre. Stancliffe's study of the literary background and of the manner in which Sulpicius

made use of his reading, both classical and Christian authors, illuminates not only Sulpicius and his work, but also the milieu in which it was written and read. As for many of his contemporaries, so for Sulpicius, "conversion" to the ascetic ideal involved no break with the secular culture (traditional among educated Romans. Sallust, especially, provided him with a historical perspective which Sulpicius was able to put to good use in his account of the Church of the post-Constantinian era, enjoying wealth, prestige and power, and especially of the Gallic Church of St Martin's and his own time).

The *Life* was addressed, in the first place, to like-minded fellow ascetics, such as Sulpicius' "dearest brother" Desiderius to whom the book was dedicated: a friend of Sulpicius in Gaul, as well as, it appears, of other ascetics such as Paulinus of Nola in Italy and St Jerome in Bethlehem. A fascinating chapter gives a vivid impression of the threads which linked members of this "ascetic brotherhood" of Christian aristocrats, bishops and scholars scattered over the Empire from Gaul to Palestine. Those are the circles in which we can best observe the anxieties that accompanied the rapid and almost wholesale Christianization of the upper and middle ranks of Roman society in the decades just before and just after 400. Within Sulpicius' own lifetime the international network of ascetic groups and individuals was to be rent by the teaching of Pelagius: the most articulate voice to raise the question what "conversion" and Christian perfection meant in a world in which respectable Christianity no longer needed to make a visible difference in a man's life. The *Life* was thus written also for, or more precisely, as Stancliffe observes, "against", the Gallo-Roman bishops and their sympathizers, who had little liking for Martin's ascetic way of life. The *Dialogues*, written in defence of Martin's reputation against its many detractors (his own immediate successor in the see of Tours, Brice, was one of them), are even more overtly concerned to uphold the Martinian ideal in the face of opposition from worldly clergy. Beyond such circles, Stancliffe sees Sulpicius addressing also Roman fellow literati: "those whose loyalties to Christianity were still torn by their love for the classical culture in

which they were nurtured".

Having assessed the aims of Sulpicius' work, the public he was writing for, his sources of information and the literary influences upon him, Stancliffe proceeds to face head-on the problems raised by the miracle stories. In contrast with the sobriety he shows in his *Chronicle*, playing down miraculous explanations of events, in his Martinian writings Sulpicius does the opposite: he has recourse to them at every opportunity. After due allowance is made for the role of literary borrowing and the "hagiographer's licence" sanctioned by convention, in heightening, supernaturalizing or exaggerating reports of real events - reports which may already have been shaped in the oral tradition by literary precedents relating similar events to others - one is still left with the question: what liberties did Sulpicius allow himself to take with the historical truth about Martin? In two chapters Stancliffe sketches with rapid strokes those aspects of Late Antique cosmology which facilitated the interpretation of events in miraculous terms and the traditions of perception which would encourage such interpretation. The various categories of stories in which Sulpicius ascribes miraculous powers to Martin are scrutinized with a sane scepticism.

Her perceptive, critical and discriminating approach to the narratives leaves us, finally, with a Martin who made a powerful impact on his hagiographer. Sulpicius wrote of Martin because he had come to love him and admire him. He certainly wanted to defend the ascetic ideal in a Church widely hostile to it; but it was an ideal he had learnt from Martin and made his own, not one which he propagated with the aid of a purpose-built myth of the saint. There is much in the *Life* where a factual kernel clearly takes precedence over a timeless ideal and a number of stories which show Martin and his career "in the harsh light of reality, not the golden effulgence of otherworldly perfection".

Sulpicius, in the author's judgment, was certainly selective in his portraiture of his hero. Martin's missionary work, evangelizing the pagan countryside, though of crucial importance, crops up only incidentally in Sulpicius' pages, and usually on account of the miracle stories associated with it. There is even less

about Martin's pastoral work and the ordinary routine of episcopal office: running a diocese, worrying over the accounts, settling disputes, giving leadership to his clergy. Perhaps, to judge by some contemporary reactions to the uncouth monk-bishop who insisted on living away from his cathedral in a rural monastic retreat, Martin's interest in such matters was less than overwhelming, and there are hints that he may not have been good at establishing working relationships with his clergy and other bishops. All the same, Sulpicius does, occasionally, allow his readers a glimpse of Martin as a conscientious shepherd of his flock. What Sulpicius wanted to idealize was Martin the ascetic. That was the ideal he had come to adopt for himself, substantially identical with Martin's own. His purpose caused Sulpicius to mislead by omission rather than by invention.

The final chapters of the book explore Martin's career and Sulpicius' account of it in the context of the tensions in the Church in the aftermath of the Priscillianist crisis. These are among the most interesting parts of the book. Sulpicius had good reason for wanting to convey the impression that Martinian asceticism was no different from Jerome's ideal: Jerome's authority would be a good defence against those who saw a Priscillianist heretic lurking in every ascetic. Martin, we are told, "was supremely unlucky in the period in which he lived, for the controversy caused by Priscillian's case ran deep, splitting the Church - and splitting it into those for and against asceticism". True; but this is to narrow the canvas unduly. Priscillian and Martin both belonged to a world facing the crisis of the accelerating mass Christianization of Roman society. So did Sulpicius, and Jerome, Paulinus of Nola as well as Jerome's enemy, the anti-monastic Vigilantius (who turns out, in all probability and tantalizingly, to have been closely associated with Sulpicius) - and so did, in the end, Pelagius. They were all engaged in the anxious search for an answer to the question: how was Christian perfection to be pursued? The line which divided heresy from asceticism in these decades was not always clear. This rigorous and perceptive study of Martin and Sulpicius has illuminated the crisis of conscience through which their society was passing.

# In the natural style

Dorothy Stroud

DAVID JACQUES  
Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature  
240pp. Batsford. £25.  
071343452

From the title *Georgian Gardens* the reader might expect an account of this subject to begin with the accession of George I, when the pendulum of taste was already poised to swing away from the geometrical precision which had previously prevailed in garden design, and when, within a few months, there came a coincidence of events significant in shaping the course of a new and freer style. David Jacques' preface, however, explains that his book is one of a proposed series, and that the early period of "natural" gardening will be dealt with by another hand at a later date. This is a pity, for the ultimate success of the new style, which today is usually called landscape gardening, drew its strength from those early years when the Palladian revival fostered by the Earls of Burlington and Pembroke guided the building and estate activities of the newly established Whig landowners, and when liberal philosophy was joined by practical advancement in husbandry and reclamation. There was, moreover, the influence exerted at this time by the Kit-cat Club, whose members, including the Dukes of Grafton and Newcastle, the Earls of Carlisle, Scarborough and Lincoln, Viscount Cobham and Sir Robert Walpole, caught each other's enthusiasm for the new concepts and thereafter took them far and wide across the countryside to be put into effect on their various estates. Of all this we must look forward to hearing more later, but meanwhile, having been offered the cart before the horse, we have at least something for which to be grateful.

Mr Jacques has chosen to begin his story in 1733, this being the year in which, to use his own words, "the Natural Style was first tried out by William Kent". The decision is justified if we accept Horace Walpole's dictum that Kent was the first designer "to strike out a great system from the twilight of imperfect essays", although it should be remembered that Walpole, as a well-informed observer on garden history, had found several of the "imperfect essays", and the work of Charles Bridgeman in particular, of interest and importance.

Kent was already forty-nine when he extended his practice from architecture to garden design. Jacques ponders on the source of his inspiration in this departure but surely there can be little doubt that it lay principally in his familiarity, acquired during student days on the continent, not only with the works of the great French and Italian landscape painters, but with actual Italian gardens, celled with grottoes, cascades and statuary. Such recollections enabled him to see the setting of a country house as a series of views created out of trees and grass and water - scenes which conformed with the content of his close friend Alexander Pope that "all gardening is landscape painting".

If the number of Kent's actual creations was comparatively small, his influence was far-reaching, and not least through the principles which he instilled in his young disciple at Stowe, Lancelot Brown, who, after an acquaintance of some seven years, assumed the former's mantle when he died in 1748. Kent, Brown and, later on, Humphry Repton were successively to make up the triumvirate of designers by which landscape gardening was to be dominated until the end of the eighteenth century. All three have been the subject of biographies which is probably the reason why Jacques deals in a somewhat superficial way with their achievements and concentrates on the

... just like a landscape hung up". In fact many of Kent's landscape design could be hung up, for he devised a new and beguiling way of presenting his ideas to potential clients in sketches which must have contributed appreciably to his success. There is an affinity between several of these sketches and the masque designs of Inigo Jones which suggests that the latter were the likely source of this innovation - since Kent would certainly have known Jones's drawings, which were then in Lord Burlington's collection.

As if to make up for a late start, Jacques carries his survey through to 1825. The knell of the Georgian garden had, however, already begun to sound nearly two decades before, when its hitherto smooth course was to be fragmented by disagreement, ironically enough among some of its most devoted practitioners. The basic argument concerned what did or did not constitute picturesque beauty in the garden scene. From their respective camps the pundits waged their wordy battles as to the virtues of the shaggy or the smooth and for nearly a decade the volleys continued, to the amazement of onlookers such as Shelley who likened the participants to "ill-trained beggars ... snoring at each other when they could not catch the hare". With the new century came other pressures of a social and economic kind resulting in the breaking up of many great estates and the rise of a new class of owner to whom nature meant little, and the landscape nothing beyond the cash value of its timber. Garden enthusiasts certainly survived and multiplied, but they were for the most part of a different calibre, interested in plant collecting and hybridization, in conservatories and formal bedding and colourful displays - all highly commendable, but far removed from the Georgian ideal to the appreciation of which David Jacques' book makes a useful contribution.

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A view in Catton Park by Humphry Repton, reproduced from Humphry Repton Landscape Gardener 1752-1818 by George Carter, Patrick Goode and Kedron Laurie (Victoria and Albert Museum, 0946009/03.11).

# The fastidious stigma

T. Halliday

MARY F. WILSON and NANCY BURLEY  
Mate Choice in Plants: Tactics, Mechanisms,  
and Consequences  
251pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£30.50 (paperback, £10.90).  
0691983118

Evolutionary biologists are preoccupied with sex, and rightly so. Variation between individuals in terms of reproductive success provides the basis on which natural selection acts and, ultimately, whether or not two organisms belong to the same species depends on whether they can mate successfully with one another. In the last ten years many zoologists have turned their attention to the study of mate choice. This proposition is that animals should be adapted to that they do not simply seek a mate of the same species as themselves, but should attempt to choose a partner from within their species that will yield the highest possible reproductive success. Since females typically expand more territory in reproduction than males and have a lower reproductive potential, it is expected that, in most species, they will exercise choice among the males available to them.

Mary F. Wilson and Nancy Burley extend this general hypothesis to plants in a challenging and demanding book. The challenge lies in the fact that their arguments are highly speculative; they present virtually no evidence that plants do show mate choice but list several possible mechanisms by which such choice might operate. They justify their approach by quoting T. H. Huxley's assertion that, to make progress in advancing our understanding of nature, scientists must, from time to time, formulate hypotheses that go far beyond established knowledge: "those who refuse to go beyond fact, rarely go as far as fact". The object of this book is to prevail on botanists to look at plant reproduction from a new perspective and to seek data that support or refute the authors' hypotheses. The book is demanding, presented fully to understand all the arguments presented, the reader needs to be thoroughly conversant with the extraordinary intricacies of plant reproductive physiology.

Little wonder few French gardens remain. Many have been actively destroyed; more have

pollen via the stigma. Many more pollen grains usually alight on any one stigma than are required to fertilize the ovules lying below it. The central thesis of this book is that, just as most plants possess mechanisms that prevent pollen belonging to the wrong species reaching the ovules, so they may be able to discriminate among pollen from different flowers of their species in such a way that the ovules are fertilized by preferred males. One possibility is that pollen may be discriminated against if it comes from a plant that is a close genetic relative of the recipient; in this way plants could minimize the risk of maladaptive inbreeding. Another is that pollen may be preferred if they are rich in nutrients for the developing zygotes, favouring

those who vilify zoologists for applying such terms to the behaviour of animals and one male investment in progeny.

Thus, flowers can apparently no longer be thought of as passive receivers of pollen; but are the focus of intense competition between male gametes to be accepted by flowers as suitable to fertilize their female gametes. The stigma becomes a microscopic analogue of the frontletting groups formed by certain birds, in which males compete with one another to gain acceptance by females. Wilson and Burley emphasize the heterodox nature of their hypothesis by deliberately borrowing the vivid and anthropomorphic language of sociobiology. Thus plants make "choices" and "decisions", adopt a variety of "tactics" and, in some species, may commit "eucoldry". There are those who vilify zoologists for applying such terms to the behaviour of animals, and one imagines that many botanists will be less than enthusiastic about this way of thinking about plants.

This book is the latest in an excellent series of monographs that includes a number of volumes which, by adopting a bold, hypothetical stance that goes beyond existing factual knowledge, have pioneered much productive research. Only time will tell whether this book belongs to that tradition; much depends on the extent to which botanists respond to the challenge in the way that this authors hope.

manifestation of conspicuous consumption. The gardens of the nineteenth century no longer needed interminable avenues for lords on prancing horses or ladies in elegant carriages, nor a balloon from which to view the geometric splendours in their entirety. The extermination of the wolf and the bear had robbed nature of its terrors. The field was now open to Robinson and his disciples. The wealth of newly introduced plants gave variety and demanded a more leisurely pace and a smaller scale. Significant was Les Moutiers with its Lutyns house and Jekyll garden; and Guillaume Mallet's park inspired by his collection of Claude drawings. The connection between gardening and the art of painting was becoming clear, culminating in the garden of Claude Monet at Giverny.

Many of the more recent gardens are inspiring: Russell Page's Jardin du Cimetière for Hubert Faure at the Manoir de La Bruyère; Vasterval of Princess Sturdza; Kerdalo of the Prince Wolkonsky; the herbarium garden of the Rochefoucauld; and Jas. Crema of the Brionne de Waldner, which shows what can be done in four years. Most of the illustrations in *Private Gardens of France* are good, particularly those by Robert Cézanne, whose photograph of Vasterval is quite outstanding. The descriptions quoting the owners are instructive, and revealing, and at £30 this beautifully illustrated book does not seem overpriced.

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# God-centred continuities

Colin Thompson

MICHAEL COX  
Mysticism: The Direct Experience of God  
255pp. Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.  
£4.95.  
0850302803  
PATRICK GRANT  
Literature of Mysticism in Western Tradition  
179pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0333287993

When Teresa of Avila described the soul as an interior castle, most people never explore, she was stating a truth we needed Freud and Jung to demonstrate. In our fragmented society, in which we are alienated from our inner resources, we remain largely dismissive of the most ancient and neglected spring of wisdom in Western culture. Its mystical tradition - "Contemplation" and "spirituality" carry a more positive meaning than mysticism, which has become associated with "mystification", something which, however impressive, is always contrived, explicable. But the great mystics insist that visions, raptures and the like are a dangerous distraction along the way, not to be indulged in, but to be transcended in the way of the mystic.

Yet the claims this literature makes are so vast, and its artistic expressions so compelling, that even when mystics tell us we can only understand them from within a shared experience, we cannot help standing at the edge and peering into the abyss: wondering what tools may reduce it to comprehensibility. But then the mystics themselves attempt to express the indescribable, and pages which ought to be blank are crisscrossed full of the very images and concepts which vanish when Meister Eckhart talks us, "even God disappears". Grant reminds us that there are two attitudes of mind: one is a purification of the notion of God, and so forges a link between Eckhart, Richard Jefferies and Simone Weil, author of that quotation: "The *via negativa* is its barest yet needs the *via affirmativa*, the rich but halting tongue of images, which means that mysticism is a kind of poetry of religion".

Grant's searching study contains six wide-ranging essays; they hover around the mystical centre, rather than follow in linear progression, which is as it should be in a subject which questions us as much as it answers. A line

way among names and schools, and aims at a general, non-specialist audience. The sections on Protestant mystics and the mystical sense in English literature (from Donne to Wordsworth) are especially to be welcomed.

Patrick Grant's *Literature of Mysticism in Western Tradition* stands alongside two fine books, Rowan Williams' *The Wound of Knowledge* (1979) and Andrew Louth's *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition* (1981), which together deepen and refine the pioneering work of Evelyn Underhill, Cuthbert Butler and the like. Grant knows that mysticism raises acute problems for the critic, not just in literature but in psychology, philosophy and theology. A continuous body of experience which claims to be unitive does not take kindly to the method of analysis by competing disciplines.

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from within faith, he observes "the futility of discussing mystical experience outside some framework of belief". One can disagree, but at least he declares himself. You cannot be neutral about mystics: the facade of objectivity hides unstated assumptions (another kind of faith). He looks to mystics who have written, rather than to those who have written about mystics, and a third of the book consists of anthologies of texts, rarely more than a few lines long, following the chapters and grouped in themes - faith and understanding, words and silence, relinquishment, the Cross and its passing. This does not leave much room for the study itself, which is dense, and demands much of the reader.

The title may mislead: this is not conventional literary criticism, but a study of the cultural background against which the tradition developed and changed. The language of writers like Rolle, Spenser, Donne, Teresa, Law, Bunyan, Thoreau and Jefferies is rooted in the fertile complexities of thought and experience, and issues in a literature "maintaining the dialectic between a culture's articulate framework of reasoned enquiry, and vision that continues to outstrip it". Jefferies becomes an example of the theme of the third chapter, the inward flight of the spirit. Augustine could read creation as a book of spiritual truths, but the new epistemology, the descent of which Grant traces through Occam, Descartes and Malebranche into Enlightenment philosophy, empirical science and Romanticism, made this impossible - gone was the "God-centred continuity between language and things, images and ideas". Has the effect of this on mystical literature been as dramatic as he maintains? Mystics constantly testify to the bridging of subject and object, and see continuities where most of us see chasms. It will be interesting to observe how the abandoning of a mechanistic view of the universe by science will affect contemporary spirituality. It is Teilhard, not mon-

itioned here) a forerunner, or an isolated eccentric?

This book, though difficult, has a pervading integrity, sanity and wisdom about it. We need to be reminded that Western mysticism has not been a private retreat from an oppressive or incomprehensible world; it has engaged and prised it. It has regarded love and service of others as the necessary consequence of a true experience of God. There is a vitality about the outward lives of the great mystics which defies any reductionism. Grant has shown words for those who have used religion to serve the ego and to destroy others; and his dialogue for those who explain the Alonement in crude transactional terms is made only too clear.

It may be that the last chapter is the best starting-point, with its outline history of the tradition and its statement of the conditions which surely fires the book (but then mystics like paradoxes about endings and beginnings). Reflecting on the success of Eastern religions in the West, Grant writes:

And yet ecumenism cannot be by way of interfaith collapse, and the West needs, still, to understand its spiritual history, and to reclaiming how its characteristic techniques of dividing to conquer, of manipulating to control, were developed from a state of mind and language which once knew the life of the Spirit objectively in the world.

So his book becomes a trial of our culture, and that culture is found wanting. It sets before us this task of "reimagination" and at the same time provides us with the stimulation to begin.

Three further volumes in Blackwell's "Faith and the Future" series, noticed by J. L. Hall in the TLS, December 23, 1983, are *Religion and the Future* (1983), *Religion and the Future* (1983), and *Religion and the Future* (1983).



# Fascination by facts

Roger Moss

MAXIMILIAN E. NOVAK  
*Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction*  
181pp. University of Nebraska Press. £13.60.  
0 8032 3307 8

LENNARD J. DAVIS  
*Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*  
245pp. Guildford: Columbia University Press.  
\$31.50 (\$12 paperback).  
0231 054203

ELIZABETH DEEDS ERMARTH  
*Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*  
278pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£23.  
0691 065608

In the best of these books Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth's *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*, a point is made about the orphan-status of so many of the heroes and heroines of realist novels, and the link between that and an ethic of self-identification. The point can be applied to the novel itself. Orphans, bastards, foundlings, parvenus – novels are full of them, and at one level they would seem to reflect doubt about the novel's own literary parentage, its own legitimacy. Doubt and complacency; for, just as there is nothing worse than the self-made man, so there is at times an intolerable smugness in the ease with which novelists come to accept their self-made literary supremacy, and in the willingness with which critics of the novel refrain from asking awkward questions.

Professor Ermarth is the least willing of these three critics to expose the lowly world into which the novel was born, but even she concedes that there is a connection between the discourses of realism and of gossip. Add gossip to a list garnered from the other books – ballads, jests, sensational journalism, crime-literature – and you have the means by which an increasingly pluralist society, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, was able to deal with all its oddities and upheavals by shutting them off within the myth-making language of the "fascinating fact".

What is remarkable is the way that overt fiction is caught up in the same process. In little more than a century, story-telling turns from the role of ushering its audience into the realm of the imagination to that of guessing with them what might be going on behind an imaginary neighbour's curtains. It might be possible to construe this as part of that healthy process whereby high art renews and refreshes itself by dipping into the resources of popular tradition. This is a theory of artistic change that has been best explored by Bakhtin in relation to Rabelais and Dostoevsky. But it does not work for the realist novel, not in England anyway. For the English novel does not dip into the demotic, it absorbs it wholesale, in the process destroying a huge fund of popular storytelling, common knowledge and lore and completely reconstructing the relationships between literature and ordinary life and art, as well as those between fiction-making and the real world. Having locked literature into these new relationships, it then throws away the key of convention, so that the freedom to move between self-evident literary conventions is constrained by the way that realism presents itself as a discourse of convention or anti-convention.

Which brings me to the various frustrations of these three books. Maximilian E. Novak's *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction* gives us the most hard evidence of the novel's involvement in a world of low discourse, and of the dubious legitimacy (at many levels) of the "fact" of the English novel. Defoe, but Novak does this almost inadvertently, and certainly without any wish to interrogate the large and important terms of his title. The book is really a celebration of Defoe, rather than an enquiry into his importance, or into the ambiguous status of realism. It is at its best when Novak's intimate knowledge of his subject is displayed in a profusion of anecdotes about the way that *Robinson Crusoe* or *Defoe's* crime-writing belongs to Defoe's other world of news sheets, rather than to the world of the mercantile novel. Yet even here, the description of Defoe as the "mythologist of the

crime-wave", or of the mythical resonances of *Crusoe*, is tantalizing rather than instructive, since little is said to develop the inherent theoretical interest of such terms. It is much less good when the literary coherence of *Moll Flanders* or *Roxana* is being argued for, because here, as with the recurrent praise of Defoe's "genius", "amazing wit and intelligence" or "skill", Novak's enthusiasm blinds him to the need to provide comparative grounds for his assertions.

*Factual Fictions* at least elaborates a more broadly based theoretical position; Lennard J. Davis understands the inherent duplicity of the novel, and sees the need to examine in detail its dubious parentage. His particular quarry is the habit of early novelists of presenting their fictions as fact. His real subject is therefore still Defoe, though he extends this to include Richardson and Fielding, more by loose analogy than substantial links. In this enterprise, he could have done with some of Professor Novak's attention to detail, to offset his own tendency towards a fussy over-sophistication which masquerades as theoretical refinement. Certainly, he could have spent more profitable time worrying over terms like "fact", "fiction" and "reality", than by setting out with an enquiry into the possible significance of the term "beginning". When he appears to find the notion of a lie, like Defoe's in *Roxana*, epistemologically more complex than Cervantes's paradoxes of self-reference in *Don Quixote*, the need for such clarification becomes urgent. And when he follows this by asserting that such self-reference is a result of the new typography – dismissing Homer's Demodokos and Chaucer's Chaucer at a stroke – the reader's confidence in his judgments begins rapidly to fade away.

It would be pleasing to be able to say that Davis was better on his own territory. But this would be to assume that he had identified an interesting problem, which is not finally clear. Only in the tenth chapter does he glance at the possibility that all this talk about factuality from the sixteenth century onwards, may arise from a desire to make works seem more realistic, and to announce this desire to readers. His answer is that the term "realism" was not current during that time. But this is precisely the point: lacking the term, and having a glimmering of the concept, writers might very well have fallen back on the clumsy, but available, terminology of "fact" as opposed to "fiction". It is a possibility that Davis could have entertained more seriously without being required to abandon his subject. On the contrary, it could have kept that subject more clearly in focus, and treated the problematic status of "fact" in fiction with some of the real interest it deserves.

As it is, whatever interest it might have been defeated by Davis's taste for ugly and unhelpful terms like "news/novel discourse", and by his avid reading of prefaces rather than novels. His repeated analysis of the ambiguities within prefaces is dull, because prefaces tend to be dull. But it is also surprisingly naive, for a book of this kind, in that it notices the ambiguities within, but not the ambiguity of, prefaces, consistently treating them as critical explications on a par with his own, rather than as contrivances of the fiction itself.

Five or ten years ago, this book might have been offered as a modest guide to an unregarded aspect of the novel's development, with useful information and some relevant analysis. Its essentially empiricist cast of mind would not have been disguised by so much methodological self-consciousness, or over-stretched by such needless self-importance.

Professor Ermarth's *Realism and Consensus*, by contrast, is a model of conceptual clarity. She has utilized her reading of modern theory in an independent way to construct a view of realism that is all the more impressive for being built out of such simple materials. A past-tense narrative and an impersonal narrator – these, along with a well-informed reading of Renaissance perspective theory, are the constituents of a fictional method which enforces a coherent ethic. "Consensus" is the name that Ermarth gives to this, form as well as meaning, and it is the essence of her powerful advocacy of the realist novel. As she goes, she knocks down one by one some revered assumptions about realism: the godlike narrator, the persona of the narrative voice, the distinction between first and third-person narratives, the connection between realism and social cohesiveness, are among the victims of her assured demolition-work. In their place, she offers the redeeming and revelatory power of time, the assurance of depth arising from a multiplicity of viewpoints, and the need for distance in order to attain knowledge, as the characteristics of "consensus".

At the same time, her book contains some very thorough analysis, and is, for example, consistently sensitive to the metaphorical relationships between characters in the novels and their roles as "readers" or "creators" of lives. The particular frustration of *Realism and Consensus*, then, is that despite all this conceptual

subtlety and the willingness to make profitable use of ideas such as literary reflexivity, it is still radically unwilling to question the novel's status and the determinants of literary realism. Indeed, Ermarth's implicit idea of historical development is the old one of progress, from which the realist novel emerges triumphant. Her references to perspectival theory do not really constitute historical argument so much as an nnnology, since there is presumably painful and continuous process by which these sixteenth-century ideas about vision emerge in eighteenth and nineteenth-century narratives. The use of such an nnnology, in fact, looks worryingly like the theory she describes, where an illusion of depth is created by the intersection of two arbitrary planes of vision. The real depths from which the novel comes are left unexplored.

As the analytical chapters proceed, the inherent teleology of her argument becomes plain. As of old, eighteenth-century novels are given marks for effort. But the main victim of Ermarth's scheme is Jane Austen. Her resistance to notions of consensus is construed as a resistance to realism, and only in *Persuasion* are there enough signs of strain in the social hierarchy, and in the cohesion between public and private values, for it to be seen as a breakthrough into consensus and, therefore, into realism.

Ermarth's "consensus" is really my "complicity" seen in a favourable light, and this must explain my doubts about what is an intelligent and forceful book. "If enough people had shared enough information", she tells us, Jo the crossing-sweeper in *Black House* need not have died. What she does not comment on is the structural incapacity of the realist novel to represent the terms by which many a Jo must die in a society organized like that of *Black House*. Jo is excluded from consensus for the sake of sentiment, and if we do not notice that, it seems to me that we collude in his death and in his exclusion. What is worrying about Ermarth's book is that she has put all her sophistication and intellectual range at the service of an argument that does not merely redress moments like Jo's death, but which confirms the whole received view of the realist novel in sharper and fresher terms. Critical consensus treads dangerously close upon critical complicity. I do not say this to impugn Ermarth's integrity or to detract from her book, but rather to underline the power of realistic conventions and the difficulty of working intelligently and persuasively outside them.

miro he sought to escape. "In the labor of self-presentation, rather than in a transcendently achieved laureate self. The Works of Ben Jonson find their true, though unacknowledged, center."

The reasonableness of his vision of the past becomes deeply imaginative as he tackles his subjects. In Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* he sees Colin as the poet Spenser might have become and refused to. Spenser rejects the amateur courtly tradition for a hard-working and longer-lived professionalism. He does not disavow poetry as a youthful folly but claims for it a central cultural place. Here as elsewhere, Helgerson's approach is hot as revolutionary as the claims; but he writes with unusual sympathy. Spenser is unable to sustain the role he creates: the intrusion of current events into Book V of *The Faerie Queene* shows that a greater distance from power is needed. That Colin Clout's vision tends to "diarm and disable" Calidore in Book VI shows that the private and public have come apart, and Spenser, applying ends in the private contemplation of mutability. His career provides a model for what poets might become, but enacts the tensions of that possibility.

For Ben Jonson things are harder. Spenser has already lived, and where poetry had been his own justification, it must now be authorized by learning. Jonson finds the major modes of epic and pastoral effectively closed to him, and rather than beginning with eulogues he opts for satire. The satirist is potentially a moral centre, Jonson's problem is that the genre to which he is confined denies him sublimity; and his artistry defies his ambition: we revel in the original he depicted, and his vanity leaves him in the

# The name of the game

Allan Mackie

JAN MARK  
*Handles*  
132 pp. Kestrel. £5.50.  
0726 58575

*Handles* ends with its heroine, Erica, on the top deck of a bus leaving the Norfolkshire village of Polthorpe.

The alley was just opposite her window and she looked along it. As if through a telescope she saw the Gremmle prodding in the distance, and Panda searching for frogs, while down below Bunny looked hurriedly at his watch as he turned the corner and scolded massively down the alley. She looked for Eric, and did not see him. He must be already in his shop, already at work; it was all going on without her, and always would, unless she could get back again.

Elsie presides over a domain of nicknames, the "handles" of the title, which has become Erica's bolt-hole during an unexpected holiday with some appalling relations in Calstead; his kingdom is a dilapidated motor-cycle repair shop.

Erica lives in Norwich, which for her consists of the motor cycle park and the multi-storey car park close to the vividly described market. Her love of motor cycles is lightly but persuasively sketched in, a love not understood by her family. To be sent into the country is to be exiled. "The countryside looked very different from the top of a bus; there was more of it, for a start, and it seemed rather flat after the hills of

Norwich." Very flat, Norfolk: Erica's most interesting contact with it at first is a vision of man-eating marrows, but by chance her aunt sends her into Polthorpe to collect jump-leads for Uncle Peter. She goes to the industrial estate, "drawn on by visions of factories, floodlights, great double gates and chain-link fences", to discover an alley with half-a-dozen tumble-down premises, and the astounding Elsie.

"Along the alley from the street came a frog on a Honda." The frog turns out to be a man in a green boiler-suit and helmet called Kermit. "Was the frog called Kermit because he looked like a frog, or had he grown to look like a frog because he was called Kermit?" The puzzling relation between imagination and reality is the heart of this very funny and ultimately very moving novel. Erica is at first enchanted, but must undergo a brutal disenchantment by embarrassment before she leaves. "The Cave was just a run-down repair shop. Bunny was Bernard, too fat in his boilersuit, and Elsie was only a man whose wife was angry with him. Erica did not know why she was angry and did not know what to think, and for the first time in weeks wished herself safely back in Calstead." The novel's ending is, after this, a triumph for the chastened and educated imagination, and for its author. Jan Mark has achieved an archetypal image of the good place of fantasy in a physically, socially and emotionally realistic framework, which makes her story instructive as well as entertaining and far more deeply engaging than its light tone leads us to expect.



In *The Glorious Flight* (39pp. Hutchinson. £5.95. 0 09 154300 2) Alice and Martin Provensen have scaled down the epic story of Louis Blériot's cross-Channel flight of 1909 in order to suit the requirements of the picture-book. Papa Blériot (seen here at the controls of Blériot XI) receives his original inspiration from the clackety clackety of an airship in 1901; overcomes years of prototypes, crashes and sprains; kisses his children Alceste, Charmaine, Suzette, Jeanne, Gabrielle and Mamma Blériot and takes off for Dover in a triumphantly thirty-seven minute flight. The witty and original text makes sense of the story and the faux-naïf illustrations, in which the horizon is dangerously tilted, aptly convey the romance of flight.

# Slugs and snails

Linda Taylor

DIANA COLES  
*The Clever Princess*  
Illustrated by Ros Asquith  
51pp. Sheba Feminist Publishers. £2.50.  
0907 779207

The fairy tale is a moral fable; good conquers evil. And it is not unusual for femaleness to be equated with goodness – the sugar and spice and all things nice theory. For fairy-tale princesses, however, niceness has, too often, been identified with passivity. In *The Clever Princess*, Diana Coles aims to put back the spice to goodness.

"Knowledge is the key; Princess Arate, the heroine, is good because she is clever. In the best sense of that word, she is skilful and dextrous (in painting and sewing), intelligent and quick-witted (she cheek-makes Prince Dulla-bore in twelve moves). She has the information to know that an enchanted land slithering with frogs is not a dangerous, the patience and understanding to tame a wild mare; the cunning to outwit a blood-lusting golden eagle (and, of course), thus, she fulfils the three (apparently impossible) tasks set by her magisterial, Boax (her miserly father has sold her into marriage for a pile of jewels). She is a heroine, her head chopped off, lives in the kingdom democratically with Boax's head of English poetry and makes her name as a poet. We'll all put our heads together and

between us, we'll be able to think of some really sensible laws."

The radical feminist kingdom will be non-competitive and non-aggressive; intelligent, understanding and kind. In terms of "goodness", the utopian future is not a million miles removed from the benign autocracy envisaged at the end of the old fairy tales. The female slant is traditional – in pantomime, the good prince is a woman in disguise, the ugly sisters and their like; men in disguise. Coles's political point is more innovative. It is a phrase that her communist ideal is only slipped in at the end and that it is blurred by the fact that, in her story, there is no room for the good guy – all the male characters are boring, stupid, aggressive and cowardly.

*The Clever Princess*, though, is a nicely constructed story, well told and funny, and with a lot of stuff about eating and good sense. It will appeal to the rational (and somewhat greedy) seven to ten year old. The illustrations by Ros Asquith are splendidly detailed (one small point – the pedantic child will be irritated by the fact that the pictorial representation of Mrs Ample's trayful of food in no way matches what Coles says Princess Arate had for dinner). But it's a bleak psychological outlook for the boys. Although the androgynous pictures of Princess Arate might give them some comfort, the unremitting nastiness of the Boaxes and the Dulla-bores will, I fear, only confirm their (and everyone else's) opinion that they are made of slugs and snails and puppy dogs' tails.

# Through the mail

Sarah Hayes

BEVERLY CLEARY  
*Dear Mr Henshaw*  
134pp. Julia MacRae Books. £5.95.  
086203 1478

In *Dear Mr Henshaw* Beverly Cleary has had the nice idea of making a novel out of letters written over a year or so by a boy reader (Leigh Botts) to his favourite author (Boyd Henshaw). In fact for a while it seems to be the only author, indeed the only book (*Ways to Amuse a Dog!* that the boy has ever read – presumably a situation familiar to the author as an ex-teacher. The correspondence is one way, although the boy Leigh does refer to Mr Henshaw's intermittent replies. In particular the occasion on which the worm turns, and the boy has to answer a whole load of questions about himself. One cannot help wondering if Cleary herself has done this to one of her persistent fans. The questions Mr Henshaw puts to Leigh are things like "Who are your friends?", when Leigh is all too aware he hasn't got any, and "What bothers you?", when what is actually bothering Leigh is the fact that his dad has left home because he prefers long-distance trucking to Leigh's mum – or "mom" (I should say because we are on the West Coast).

As Leigh becomes more fluent, he reveals more about himself. Then he starts writing a journal addressed to "Dear Mr Pretend Henshaw" where he can really get going on the soul

bating. It seems petty to castigate Cleary for this overload of stylistic devices, and for the boy's unlikely literary ability because the book reads well, and so naturally that words like "contrived" and "unrealistic" seem inappropriate.

Over the years Cleary has developed a reputation for writing sympathetically about unhappy or difficult children. She seems to know the unexpected channels of expression unhappiness sometimes chooses. Here Leigh Botts is obsessed with the person who steals the good bits out of his school lunch box, centering on the unknown thief all his resentment against his dad. Then Dad manages to lose Leigh's adored dog on the freeway in arctic conditions. At his lowest ebb, Leigh is at last able to unlock the hatred he feels for his father, admit his loneliness, and begin to look constructively at his life. He contrives a burglar alarm for the lunch box, and, though he never catches the thief, wins the respect of a school which had appeared not to notice him before.

Cleary's brand of pop psychology is a fine blend of sentimentality and case history. The freshness of her writing, its characteristic gleams of humour, and the lightly wished West Coast backdrop, lift it above the banal. The way Leigh's self-pity is tackled is admirable: it isn't shirked but it isn't ever boring either. *Dear Mr Henshaw* is a likeable book. And, as a bonus, it provides a new perspective on long-distance trucking.

# Warm collations

Jennifer Moody

ELEANOR SPENCE  
*The Left Overs*  
110pp. Methuen. £9.95.  
0454 00284X

"Left-overs make very good meals" says Auntie Bill, the local authority house-mother to her eldest ward, Drew. A questionable statement since a meal from left-overs depends more than most upon the skill of the cook. It is the reader's good fortune that Eleanor Spence is an excellent book cook. Her ingredients are a group of four children in care, a house-mother and an uncertain future; from them she concocts a satisfying and nourishing dish.

Drew (for Andrew), James, Jasmine and Straw (for Donna), in the care of the local authority for a variety of reasons, are looked after by Auntie Bill in a rambling old house which is now in the path of a projected fly-over. Eleven-year-old Drew, motherless and with a professional soldier as father, is responsible and concerned beyond his years; he decides to take a band himself in order to prevent the break-up of the group of children. He and Jasmine devise a two-fold policy: to advertise their plight directly to the outside world, and to improve themselves in order to be more attractive to a potential foster parent. Self-improvement for Jasmine means trying to catch the limelight, for Drew being smarter, cleaner and more helpful, and for James losing weight (although James, a cheerful soul, sees no need to improve himself at all and protests as he is deprived of ice cream and rice pudding). Straw is too young and insecure to be brought into the plan at all. A card is placed in a tobaccoist's window, a placard is displayed from the audience of a popular television chat show, with little useful outcome. Then Drew writes to the parents of James and Jasmine, both of whom are as a result returned to their families. The group is broken up; Straw goes with Auntie Bill to a home in the country and Drew starts at a residential home for adolescent boys. Only on the very last page do we learn that James is Aboriginal, Jasmine half-Chinese and Straw retarded.

Eleanor Spence is born and bred Australian, and her novel is set firmly in that country. Once the reader has surmounted the mild surprise of a summer holiday centred on Christmas and approaching autumn in January, the bracing lack of sentimentality that we associate with Australia blends well with the potential pain of the subject. What could so easily be a maudlin and sentimental novel, is a brisk, entertaining and understanding work. By appearing to have made no effort to do so, the author has succeeded in moving us.

# Paperbacks in brief

Naomi Lewis *Hare and Badger Go To Town*. Illustrated by Tony Ross. 0 907144 39 X. PATRICK KINMONTH *Mr Potter's Pigeon*. Illustrated by Reg Cartwright. 0 907144 37 3. COLIN McNAUGHTON *King Nanni the Wiser*. 0 907144 34 9. JANOSCH *See you in the morning*. 0 907144 40 3. TONY ROSS *The Greedy Little Cobbler*. 0 907144 36 5. Methuen. £1.50 each. □ The most recent books in Methuen's small-format picture books, "Pocket Bears", continue the eclectic editorial policy and high standard of production of the first titles in the series. The books reflect a wide range of styles from the delicate to the broadly humorous. GERALD ROSS *The Tiger-skin Rug*. Puffin. £1.25. 0 14 050323 4. □ First published in 1979. Highly coloured, slightly grotesque illustrations decorate the unlikely story of a tiger who pretends to be a rug in a Rajah's palace, foils some robbers and lives happily ever after. PAMELA OLIPHANT *The Princess Went-Id-May*. Illustrated by Glenys Ambrus. Hodder and Stoughton. £1.50. 0 340 33200 X. □ First published 1979. The indecisive heroine rejects the proposal of Jon the shepherd boy in rhyming couplets, insisting that he perform certain tasks first. Jan does everything with a clack, then sensibly marries someone else. *Seeing and Doing*. 112pp. Methuen. £2.50. 0 423 00850 1. □ First published in 1977. A strongly recommended reissue of the collection of stories and poems chosen to complement the long-running Thames Television series of the same name. The anthology, which is aimed at the very young, comes with musical examples and pictures by Diane Elson. The verse ranges from A. A. Milne to Woody Guthrie. MERVYN PEAKE *A Book of Nonsense* 91pp. Penguin. £1.50. 0 14 006867 8. □ First published in 1972. A slim collection of twenty-nine of Peake's nonsense rhymes. Including "The Dwarf of Batterssea" and "Aunts and Uncles" with illustrations by the author and an introduction by Maevie Gilmore.



